

**Real Purpose of Life
and Quest for
Eternal Happiness
and Endless Success**



Real Purpose of Life and Quest for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success

Compiled from the timeless works of one of the
greatest thinkers and revivers of the entire
human civilization - Imam Abu Hamid
Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 A.D.)

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Dr. Muhammad Ahmad Hashmi (1929 – 2014 A.D.) for inspiring and guiding the compilation of this treatise from Imam Ghazali's timeless treasures of wisdom and spirituality, emanating from his love for humanity and an ardent desire for its well-being and benefit.

سُرِّيهِمْ ءَايَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّى
يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ

“We will show them Our Signs in the farthest reaches of the universe and within their own souls, until it becomes clearly manifested to them that this is the Truth.”

(Qur'an, Chapter 41, Verse 53)

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of time immemorial, humanity has grappled with the fundamental questions of its existence and purpose. Questions like “Who am I?”, “Where have I come from?”, “Where I am heading to?”, “What’s the purpose of my life?”, and “What is true everlasting happiness and success?” have eluded satisfactory answers. The inner peace one yearns to achieve, gravitates around unlocking the mystery around these fundamental questions of existence. Answering these key questions have been attempted throughout human history, but not to the extent of fully satisfying one's quest for truth, on which rests the well-being of the inner and outer being of man.

This treatise provides a pathway for answering these fundamental questions of existence, starting with explanations but culminating with inviting all to the inner realization through experiencing with an inner eye of certitude, and in that process, illuminating the path of eternal happiness and endless success. Additionally, this treatise ties naturally into the discourse on Islam that has been significantly lowered in modern times to a mere ritualistic outer level, due to general ignorance of its followers with its immense spiritual teachings, general prevalent materialism, and paucity or absence of true knowledge and spiritual ambition. Consequence of this state of affairs is a downward trajectory, obfuscating the beauty of its real message of striving for the pinnacle of human achievement. This can only be reversed by going back to the lofty ideals it came to set for the entire humanity. It’s imperative to raise this level of discourse to its highest level, where it actually belongs, in order to uplift hopes, aspirations and spirits in order to benefit the entire humanity.

This treatise, inspired by one of the finest exponents of Islam and of its spiritual teachings to the entire humanity, a gem of the human race, raises the discourse on Islam and its spiritual teachings to where they belong - to the highest possible level of human achievement - to the pinnacle of spiritual ascension, which in turn leads to eternal happiness and endless triumph. Earthly resources are limited, leading to intense competition for their acquisition, enmity and resulting turmoil faced by humanity. However, the ocean of Divine love, manifested in spiritual excellence of its achievers, is limitless satisfying the inner needs of the first and the last of humanity for all times, without diminishing a drop from its immensity. Just like sky is not diminished in the slightest when entire humanity looks at it to find soothing relief and tranquility, not an iota is diminished from the ocean of Divine Generosity, from which the rivers of eternal happiness and endless triumph flow, if the entire humanity partakes of it to its fullest potential.

This treatise challenges readers to raise ambitions and soar to the heights of the pinnacle of human achievement, instead of sinking to the depths of despair and low achievement due to lack of true purpose and direction in life, subconscious dedication to the mundane and contentment with the ordinary. This treatise, unfolding in intensity as it progresses, shows the art of the possible and true potential and worth of man, which in turn leads to eternal happiness and endless success into a life of immortal eternity. Limitations of human body, mind and intellect, trapped in the constraints of dimensions of time and space, are more than compensated, by the loftiness of its heart and soul, once liberated from the shackles that hold it down. This treatise leads one to the fathomless ocean of eternal happiness and never-ending success, putting one firmly on the path of eternal bliss, opening up new previously unknown vistas of awareness and spiritual illumination and culminating in the dawning of eternal truths. This will be accomplished through the gems of a master author of the subject that the entire human civilization has ever produced.

PREFACE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful

The purpose of this exposition is to know the real purpose of human life, how to achieve that purpose, and benefits of striving to achieve the purpose of one's life. It is important to know that because these are the most critical questions for each and every individual. In order to find out the answers to these key questions, we will rely on the books of one of the greatest thinkers, revivers, and spiritual guides of the entire human history – Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 A.D.) popularly known as Al-Ghazali.

There are three parts of this exposition.

First part deals with the questions: What is the real purpose of our lives? What is eternal happiness? What is real everlasting success? What is the mutual relationship between the two?

Second part deals with the inner spiritual path we need to travel to achieve the real purpose of our lives and the eternal bliss.

Third part deals with sources of further information and detailed study regarding the real purpose of our lives and attainment of eternal bliss so that we can progress on the path leading to the realization and attainment of the purpose of our lives and of the eternal bliss.

First Part: Exposition of the Real Purpose of Human Life and Attainment of Eternal Bliss and Endless Triumph

The real purpose of human life is to know God and through that, obtaining the “*Ma'rifa*” or Gnosis of God and developing a close intimate spiritual relationship with Him. Only through that, a human being can obtain eternal bliss, i.e., eternal happiness and endless triumph. This exposition will take a deep dive into that to find out how and why it is so, after some initial explanations.

God says in Qur'an:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

Wa ma khalaqtu al-jinna wa al-insa illa li ya'budoon

“I have created Jinns and mankind only to worship Me.” (Qur'an, Chapter 51, Verse 56)

Abdullah bin Abbas (may God be pleased with him), a great companion of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) who was among the greatest scholars of Qur'an among the Prophetic

companions, explained that the word “*li ya’budoon*” or “for My worship” in this verse, means “*li ya’rifoon*” or “for My Gnosis”. This explanation of this verse of Qur’an can be found, among other books, in the famous classical exegesis of Qur’an called “*Tafsir Jalalain*”. In other words this verse means that the purpose of creation of human being is to know God, to develop a close intimate relationship with God, to have Gnosis of God (“*Ma’rifa*”), and to reach the lofty spiritual station of Divine intimacy and closeness. When one reaches this lofty spiritual station, one attains a never ending wealth, true inner peace, comfort of the heart, real abiding success, and an eternal life that never ends, in other words, one attains to the eternal bliss. So this is the definition of eternal bliss (or eternal happiness) and the way to attain it is to know God and to attain the Gnosis of God (“*Ma’rifa*”). This eternal bliss starts in this life and its completion and perfection, in the form of eternal life immortalizing a human being, happens in the life after this life.

This process of spiritual transformation which is the real purpose of Islam, is explained by the following tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) from “*Hadith*” or collection of Prophetic narrations known as *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*:

Narrated by Omar (May God be Pleased with him who was a helper and companion of Prophet Muhammad): “One day while we were sitting with the messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black; no signs of journeying were to be seen on him and none of us knew him. He walked up and sat down by the Prophet. Resting his knees against his and placing the palms of his hands on his thighs, he said: ‘O Muhammed, tell me about *Islam*’. The messenger of God said: ‘*Islam* is to testify that there is no god but God and Muhammed is the messenger of God, to perform the prayers, to pay the *Zakat* (helping the needy financially), to fast in [the month of] *Ramadan*, and to make the pilgrimage to the House [of God i.e., the sacred sanctuary in Mecca] if you are able to do so.’ He said: ‘You have spoken rightly’, and we were amazed at him asking [the Prophet] and saying that he had spoken rightly. He said: ‘Then tell me about *Iman*.’ He (the Prophet) said: ‘It is to believe in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in Divine destiny, both the good and the evil thereof.’ He said: ‘You have spoken rightly’. He said: ‘Then tell me about *Ihsan*.’ He (the Prophet) said: ‘It is to worship God as though you are seeing Him, and while you see Him not, yet truly He sees you’.... Then he took himself off and I stayed for a time. Then he (the Prophet) said: ‘O Omar, do you know who the questioner was?’ I said: ‘God and His messenger know best’. He (the Prophet) said: ‘He was *Jibrael* (Archangel Gabriel), who came (i.e., in human form) to you to teach you your religion.’” (This tradition is taken from *Hadith* [or Traditions of Prophet Muhammad] collection called “*Sahih Muslim*”).

According to Islamic scholars, this event took place forty-five days before the death of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). By that time, the Divine revelation of entire Qur’an (Islam’s holy book believed to be revealed by God to Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] over a period of 23 years) was completed and the famous verses of Qur’an were revealed saying:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

“Today, I have completed the *Deen* (i.e., Path to God) for you, completed My Favor upon you, and have named it (i.e., the Path to God) ‘Islam’.” (Qur’an, Chapter 5, Verse 3). The arrival of

Archangel Gabriel with the Divine commandment, at this juncture of history, to teach that Islam has three levels called *Islam* or submission to God, *Iman* or faith in God, and *Ihsan* or Gnosis of God (“*Ma’rifā*”), is of critical importance. In this *hadith* or tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), also known as “*Hadith* (Prophetic narration) of Gabriel”, according to explanations of great Muslim scholars, God told Prophet Muhammad through Archangel Gabriel (or *Jibrael*) that Islam has the following three levels:

1. **ISLAM:** The first level of Islam is also called “*Islam*” and it has to do with the body and it refers to following the teachings of Islam for conducting our outward lives, i.e., outer acts of worship, dealings with people, individual and collective social responsibilities, moral and ethical teachings etc., all things that can be observed by an external eye. This level is considered to be Islam’s horizontal dimension and it’s the foundation of the Islamic faith.
2. **IMAN:** The second level of Islam is called “*Iman*” or faith and certitude in God and beliefs and it has to do with the heart and it refers to the beliefs that a Muslim should have along with an effort to increase one’s certitude in God and in His Guidance in all matters of life by sincerely acquiring knowledge and applying it in our daily lives causing a deepening of one’s faith in God until no doubt is left about God and His Guidance. This level is considered to be the vertical dimension of Islam that gives Islam its height.
3. **IHSAN:** The third level of Islam is called “*Ihsan*” or spirituality symbolized by Prophet Muhammad’s words: “Worship God as if you see Him, and while you see Him not yet [have a living perpetual consciousness that] truly He sees you” and it has to do with the soul. This means that a complete or perfected Muslim is either in a state of witnessing God with the eye of one’s soul or [if one is not able to reach such lofty spiritual state then one is] in a state of perpetual contemplation that one is forever in God’s sight. This spirituality is achieved through concerted efforts to beautify one’s soul by ridding one’s heart and soul of all evil qualities like anger, hatred, jealousy, envy, arrogance, greed, injustice, impatience, egoism, racism, fanaticism, extremism, self-righteousness, vengeance, hard-heartedness, ignorance, cowardliness, entertaining evil thoughts, lust for fame/control/power, and all negative traits and tendencies; and by beautifying one’s soul by developing all good inner and positive qualities like love, patience, gratitude, forgiveness, kindness, compassion, generosity, humility, sincerity to God and to all human beings irrespective of their race, religion and nationality, trust in God, Divine remembrance, inner purity, all positive traits and tendencies, consequently developing an intimate relationship with God thus receiving Divine protection and guidance in all matters of life.

This level is considered to be Islam’s third dimension that gives Islam its depth and beauty. It is the highest level of Islam that one strives to reach in order to realize full human potential by completely eliminating darkness within one’s soul and consequently receiving the Divine light of wisdom in which one finds answers to all questions of life such as “Who am I?”, “Where have I come from?”, “Where am I heading to?”, “What is the purpose of life?”, “Why God created everything?”, and “What really is true happiness and success?”. This is where the sincere seekers of God attain a state of God-realization, i.e., gnosis which is the pinnacle of spiritual achievement, resulting in total inner peace and an endless bliss. Interestingly, this highest level of Islam is also the least understood.

The purpose of the first level of Islam, also known as “*Islam*” or “submission to the Will of God”, is to put an individual on the path to God through external acts of worship and devotion to God relating to the body or one’s outer being. The second level of Islam, known as “*Iman*” or “faith and certitude in God”, is related to the ascertainment and certitude of the heart. When an individual worships God sincerely, acquires knowledge of His Path, and strives in Divine worship, the certitude in the Being of God starts to sink deeper into one’s heart, resulting in the sweetness of faith in the heart that transforms one’s belief into an unshakable certitude in God thus removing all doubts in God and His Guidance. Making further progress on this Path to God, one reaches the third, the highest and the greatest level of Islam known as “*Ihsan*” described by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) as “worshipping God as if you see Him and if you see Him not then [having a living perpetual awareness that] He truly sees you”. It means that a spiritual traveler, who has attained such a lofty spiritual station, is either in a state of “*Mushahada*” or “*Muraqaba*”. “*Mushahada*” or “witnessing God” does not mean “witnessing the Being of God” since such witnessing will happen in the life-after as amply stated by the Divine book, but in this worldly life, “witnessing God” means “witnessing the Attributes and Actions of God”. Such Attributes and Actions of God are flowing profusely through every atom of this universe and beyond and in all forms of “existence” and such Attributes and Actions of God can be witnessed in this life through the eye of the soul. A complete exposition of this is forthcoming through Imam Ghazali’s book “*Jawahir al-Qur’an*” or “Jewels of the Qur’an”. Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), in this Prophetic narration known as “*Hadith* of Gabriel”, has said that if it’s not possible for you to worship God as if you see Him then you should worship God as if He sees you. It means that if you do not have the spiritual capacity to have “*Mushahada*” or “witnessing God” then at least have “*Muraqaba*” or “spiritual contemplation through your heart” that you are forever in the Sight of God. The proof of this can be found in another *Hadith* or Prophetic narration from *Hadith* collection “*Sahih Muslim*” in which Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has said that “God does not look at your faces and your bodies but He looks at your hearts”. When a human being contemplates and feels the Gaze of God upon one’s heart, one will not only avoid evil actions but will also prevent all evil thoughts from even entering into one’s heart, because one is in a state of contemplating that God is watching every state, outer and inner, manifest and concealed, one is in and God is fully aware of every fiber of one’s being.

It is clear from the teachings of great Muslim saints (Gnostics, intimates of God, and spiritual masters) that to reach the highest level of Islam known as “*Ihsan*” (i.e., worshipping God as if you see Him and if you see Him not, He truly sees you), where one attains the Gnosis of God (“*Ma’rifa*”) through which one attains the eternal bliss and through that one attains the real purpose of life, to reach this highest pinnacle of achievement, it is imperative that one purifies one’s soul by ridding it of all evil and negative propensities and qualities and embellishing it with all beautiful and positive propensities and qualities. Such mighty inner spiritual struggle for the purification of one’s soul, enables the soul, which is the only instrument and means of attaining the Gnosis of God, through ascending spiritual stations to soar into the Presence of God. Unlike other human faculties like mind, body and intellect, soul has no limitations and is capable of reaching the heights that other human faculties are incapable of reaching. Hence, reaching the pinnacle of human achievement is possible not through the mind, body and intellect but only through the soul, once its shackles and restraints, that hold it down, are broken.

The way to cure the diseases, evils, and all negative propensities of the soul in order to purify it, is to have a determined inner spiritual struggle in the light of the teachings of Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) to remove all inner evils that distances one from the Path to God and to inculcate all great inner spiritual qualities that take one to the goal of God's nearness, intimacy, and Gnosis. Inner evils, that are diseases of the soul, need to be removed through a determined and concerted spiritual struggle. These inner evils or diseases of the soul include but are not limited to enmity, hatred, jealousy, cruelty, oppression, foulness, rudeness, impoliteness, lies, accusations, excessive talk, boasting, pride, arrogance, deceit, uncivilized behavior, indecency, miserliness, extravagance, racial/linguistic/nationalistic/religious prejudice and arrogance, self-righteousness, hypocrisy, selfishness, self-centeredness, impatience, callousness, gloom, depression, cowardice, lacking courage, short-sightedness, negligence, heedlessness, uncaringness, all negative thoughts, words, deeds, propensities and inclinations that remove one from the path of truth and deviate one from the true inner human nature and from the path to God.

After removing the inner diseases of the soul from its deepest recesses, one needs to nurture all positive and noble inner spiritual qualities that propel one to the heights of noble character and disposition leading one to and illuminating the path to spiritual ascension. Such noble inner spiritual qualities include love, mercy, kindness, compassion, sincerity, truthfulness, courage, bravery, determination, generosity, nobility, far-sightedness, wisdom, justice, fairness, altruism, noble and pleasant manners and character, politeness, selfless service to humanity without any ulterior motives, humility, righteousness and righteous deeds, expansiveness of the heart, perpetual Divine remembrance, trust and reliance in God, purity of the heart and the soul, and all good and positive thoughts, words, deeds, propensities and inclinations that lead one to all good inner spiritual qualities and noble character into the acceptance and Presence of God. Reaching this point is reaching the level of "*Ihsan*", which is the highest level of Islam and is the pinnacle of human achievement, as pointed to in "*Hadith* (Prophetic narration) of Gabriel" in the words "worship God as if you see Him and if you see Him not, He truly sees you", in other words "*Mushahada* or *Muraqaba*" or "witnessing God or contemplation of God's envelopment of every fiber of one's being". This has been alluded to in the following verse of Qur'an:

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ، لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ ۗ

"One whose heart God has opened up and expanded for Islam (i.e., submission to the Will of God), is in a [inner spiritual] light (or illumination of wisdom) from one's Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 39, Verse 22)

This is the level of "*Ihsan*", i.e., Gnosis or the highest level of Islam which is the pinnacle of human achievement, that was reached by the Prophets of God and after them by Prophetic companions (*Sahaba*) and after them by the great saints and Gnostics. This is the same level when achieved, one becomes a true and perfected human being and God's vicegerent on earth and this is where one achieves eternal happiness and endless triumph (*Sa'adah abadiyya* or *Sa'adat-e-abadi*) that stays with one for eternity. Reaching this lofty spiritual station of absolute ascension and achieving this tremendous wealth is possible for every human being. Prophets came into this world to teach this path to humanity and after the prophetic era came to an end,

the inheritors of the prophets who are the saints and Gnostics, will be here till the end of time to teach this path to humanity with their tongues and with their glorious inner spiritual states. This is so that this path stays open for humanity till the end of time and so that God's promise that He made to the entire humanity in Qur'an till the end of time, "Those who strive in Our Ways, We will surely and definitely guide them to Our Paths. And God is with the doers of good" (Qur'an, Chapter 29, Verse 69), that Divine promise gets fulfilled and God's love and compassion that He has for the entire humanity, gets completed.

In the light of above explanation, we now briefly know the purpose of our lives and the method of achieving that purpose. In what follows, a relatively detailed explanation of the purpose of our lives and ways to achieve it will be presented. To present this explanation, help will be sought from the great illuminated timeless treasures of wisdom of one of the finest exponents of not just the Islamic civilization but of the entire human civilization, who reached the pinnacle of human achievement to the level of perfection, the level of *Ihsan*, whose books even today are illuminating the path of perfection and pinnacle of achievement for the entire humanity. This great personality is the "proof of Islam" Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058-1111 A.D.) who is popularly known as Imam Ghazali or just Ghazali.

Imam Ghazali, in his short book "*Mezan al- 'Amal*" or "Criterion of Measuring and Judging the Correctness of Human Actions", which is a short book from his collection of short books "*Majmu' a Rasa' il Imam Ghazali*" or "Collection of Short Books of Imam Ghazali", explains eternal happiness and endless success (*Sa'adah abadiyya* or *Sa'adat-e-abadi*) as follows ^[1]:

Negligence and Laziness in Seeking [Eternal] Happiness is Akin to Absurdity

What we mean by eternal bliss is: Everlasting without demise, pleasure without effort, felicity without tragedy, prosperity without poverty, perfection without defect, and esteem without humiliation.

As a whole: Everything imagined, be it a request of a petitioner or an aspiration of a yearner that is eternally there forever in a manner that will not be diminished by the passage of time and extinction of generations.

Indeed, if the whole world is full of grains and a bird was to pilfer a single grain every one thousand years then the grains will be exhausted, not diminishing anything from everlasting eternity.

This then will not need any encouragement to request it nor incriminating slackness in seeking it after confirming its existence? Since every intelligent being will scurry for lesser gains than this and it will not hold him back even if the way to accomplish it is arduous, and requires leaving the worldly pleasures, and endure a multitude of hardships.

The time spent in adversity is finite and what is missed is minimal for the worldly pleasures are transitory and easily exhausted.

As for the intelligent person it is easy for him to part with petty amount in order to gain its multiple tenfold. That is why you see everyone in commerce and industry and even in the pursuit of knowledge will withstand all kinds of humiliations, poverty, hardships, and intolerable pain, eagerly desiring a gain of a pleasure in the future that is greater than what they miss at the present moment, a limited increase. How is it then that they will not leave present conditions in order to reach priceless and unlimited gains?

There is not an intelligent being in creation that is eager to gain wealth when asked to spend a *dinar* to wait a month in order to gain pure gold surely his ego will quickly allow him to spend it. Even though it may well be requested at that very instance, indeed that a person who will not even withstand the pains of hunger, for example, in that time period in order that he may achieve an abundant reward in the future will not be considered sane.

It may be that it will not be imagined to exist in creation, even though that death is always looming and threatening over everyone and gold will not benefit anyone in the hereafter.

It may be that he will die in that month or a day after that month and will not benefit from that gold. All this will not deter his opinion in spending it for his eagerness in reaping that reward. How is it then that the opinion of the intelligent being is deceived in bearing the burden of desires in his life which is at maximum one hundred years and the reward for it is everlasting bliss?

However, the reluctance of creation in following the path of felicity is due to their lack of conviction in the final day. For even the deficient intellect will quickly judge to go on the path of felicity over one with complete intelligence.

Imam Ghazali, in his great book “*Kimiya-e-Sa’adat*” or “Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success”, written in Persian, explains eternal happiness as follows ^[2]:

Countless gratitude equal to the number of stars in the sky, drops in the rainfalls, leaves of the trees, particles of sand of deserts and the atoms in the heavens and the earth is befitting only for God, Whose attribute is His Oneness and All Majesty, Greatness, Highness and Excellence is specific for Him. No servant is aware of the perfection of His Majesty. No one has the way in the reality of His Gnosis. Rather to admit inability to get gnosis of reality is the climax of the most truthful and to admit lacking in His praise and hymn is the climax of the praise and hymn recited by the angels and the

prophets. To become astonished on the first ray of His Majesty is the climax of the intellect of the intelligent ones. To become wonder struck in search of the proximity of His Grace is the climax of the wayfarers of the mystic way. Its basis is the leaving of the hope of gnosis and to leave the desires of one's own self. The claim of perfection in the matter of His Gnosis is to think of similarity and likeness. By glancing at the grace of His Being, all eyes are dazzled. By seeing His wondrous works, the fruit borne by all intellects is the necessary Gnosis. No one should be such who should ponder into the greatness of His Being that is how and why He is. No heart should be such that it may remain inattentive to the wondrous works of His. What those are and with whose power that work. It is so that it may recognize that all are definitely the signs of His Power, and lights of His greatness. Whatever is there, it is from Him and due to Him. Rather, all that is, it is He. As in reality, nothing has existence beyond Him. Rather the existence of all is the reflection of His Being.

O dear beloved! Know it fully well that God has not created human being for sport and vanity. Rather one's duty and the dangers lying therein are both tremendous, as if one is not eternal but certainly one is to live forever. That is, if one is not from always (or lived from eternity), one will be for always. Though one's body is insignificant being made of clay but the reality of one's soul is tremendous being Divine. Though its origin is mixed with the qualities of the animals, the beasts, devils, and their impurities but when it is put to hardship, it becomes purified and gets the capability of becoming near to God. It is one's function to be the worst of the lowest and to be the best of the highest. Its lowest ebb is that by falling into the pit of animal and beast and devils, it is entangled in the web of anger and desire. Its climax is this that it reaches the rank of angels [i.e., into the spiritual realm]. For example, it (soul) should get salvation from the clutches of anger and desire. Both these should be one's prisoners and one should be their king. When this rank of kingship is gained by one, one becomes worthy to worship God. This capacity to worship is the attribute of the angels. It is the perfection of the rank of a human being. When one gets the taste of the love of God's Grace, one cannot pass a moment deprived of the Divine Sight. The sight of the Unending grace becomes one's Paradise. The paradise of eye, stomach and carnal pleasures becomes insignificant and worthless for one. As the basis of human being is imperfect and insignificant in the beginning of one's birth, hence to make one perfect is not possible without hardship and treatment like the alchemy that purifies the brass and copper and renders it into gold is extremely difficult. Everyone cannot identify it. Likewise, this alchemy that purifies the basis of human being from the impurities of beastly habits and brings to it the angelic [spiritual] purification due to which it gets the eternal bliss. It is very difficult, and every person does not know it. The object of writing this thesis is to state the elements of this alchemy which is in fact the alchemy of the eternal bliss. For this reason, we have named this book as "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success". The name "alchemy" is much befitting to this book. The reason is that in the brass and copper there is no difference other than yellowness and weight and by this alchemy there is no other object but to become rich in this world. The worldly life is short. The worldly wealth is nothing in itself. There is a world of difference between the habits of the cattle and the attributes of the angels. The fruit of this alchemy is eternal bliss.

There is no end to its limit. There is no end to its favors. No impurity can enter into its purity. This book in reality is an alchemy. Other than this, to name anything else as alchemy, is nothing but shameful.

O dear beloved! You should know that as the alchemy of gold is not found in the cottage of every old lady rather it is found in the treasures of the highly rich persons and the kings. Likewise, the alchemy of eternal bliss is also not found everywhere. Rather it is found in the Divine treasure. The Divine treasure in the heavens, is the beings of the angels and on the earth, the hearts of the Prophets. Whosoever will search them anywhere except in the court of Prophethood, one will go astray and ultimately will be defrauded. One will be getting nothing but vain fancy. One's poverty will become apparent on the Day of Judgment. The whole creation will know one's false (counterfeit) coins and everyone will come to know that one had no sense. One will hear the voice:

لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

“You were certainly in heedlessness and ignorance of this. We have removed from you the veil, so your eyesight today is sharp [as what was previously hidden from you is now in your sharp focus].” (Qur'an, Chapter 50, Verse 22)

The biggest mercy of the Most Merciful of all the merciful ones (i.e., God) is that He sent one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets (Peace be upon all of them) in the world to teach the device of this alchemy [to the people of the world] and to tell them to put the cash coin of the heart in the anvil of hardship and to teach them the way of reformation of the bad morals that cause density and impurity of the heart and the way of filling the heart with good morals. As God praised Himself by His own Glorification and Sovereignty [of His Dominion] so He declared His attribute of sending of the Prophets [and the Messenger Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] and referred to it as an obligation of Him on the creation. God says:

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوسِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ
هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

“Glorifies all that is in the heavens and on the earth for God, the King, the Sacred, the Mighty, the Wise. It is He Who sent among the unlettered a Messenger [Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] from among themselves who recite to them His revelations and purifies them [with an inner purification of the soul] and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom. And prior to it, they were in ignorance manifest.” (Qur'an, Chapter 62, Verses 1-2)

The [Arabic] word “yuzakkihim” [in the above verse] refers to the same bad morals which are the qualities of the animals and from which the Messenger of God [Prophet

Muhammad] (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) gets them released [or purified through the process of inner purification and spiritual transformation]. The [Arabic] words “*Yu'allimuhumul kitaaba wal-hikmata*” [meaning “and teaches them the Book and Wisdom” in the same above verse] refers to it that he should make them wear the dress of the attributes of angels. And the object of the alchemy (i.e., the transformative agent of spiritual transformation) is that a human being should become pure from all harmful and uncalled for things (i.e., all inner defects and harmful negative propensities of the soul) and should be adorned with the attributes of [inner spiritual] perfection. The biggest of the all the alchemy is that one should turn one’s face from the world (worldliness) and become attentive to God Almighty as has been taught to the Messenger of God (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

وَأَذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا

“*Wadhkurusma rabbika wa tabattal ilayhi tabteela*”

“And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself [to Him] with a complete devotion.” (Qur’an, Chapter 73, Verse 8)

[Arabic word] “*Tabteela*” [in above verse] means the detachment from all besides God Almighty and to leave oneself completely surrendered before God Almighty. This is the brief description of this alchemy [of eternal happiness and never-ending success]. Its details are lengthy and know no bounds. But its title is to know four things, [and] its essential elements are to know four dealings, and each essential element has ten basic principles.

The four titles [of this alchemy of eternal happiness and endless success] are:

- (1) Knowing one’s own self,
- (2) Knowing God,
- (3) Knowing the reality of the world, and
- (4) Knowing the reality of the hereafter.

To know the above four things is in fact the title of knowing Islam (i.e., submission to the Will of God). But the affairs of the essential elements of Islam are four.

The two essential elements relate to the outer self (“*Zahir*”) and the two related to inner self (“*Batin*”).

The two essential elements relating to the outer self are:

- (1) To obey the commands of God. These are called the [outer] acts of worship (“*Ibada*”).
- (2) To keep them in view in the matter of one’s movements and livelihood. These are called the [social] dealings (“*Mu'amalaat*”).

The two essential elements relating to the inner self (“*Batin*”) are:

- (1) To keep the heart [or soul] purified from all bad [inner] morals like anger, miserliness, arrogance, pride, self-righteousness, etc. These [bad and low inner character traits or] morals are called “*Muhlikaat*” (negativities or inner vices or destructives of the soul) and “*Aqabaat*” (the dark and narrow places where people become victims of robbers) in the way of faith.
- (2) To adorn the heart [or soul] with good [inner] morals like patience, gratitude, love, hope, trust in God, etc. These morals are called “*munajjiyaat*” (positivities or all exalted inner character traits of the soul that bring it salvation, felicity, true [eternal] happiness, and [everlasting] success).

The first [of the four] essential elements in which there is mention of worship [of God] consists of ten foundations. They are:

- (1) In the matter of beliefs of *Ahl al-Sunnah* (i.e., those who are on the correct traditional methodology that relies on an unbroken chain of transmission and certified scholarship at all levels [of conducting outward lives, inner faith and spirituality] that goes back to Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] and through him to God Almighty),
- (2) In the matter of seeking knowledge,
- (3) In the matter of cleanliness (or outer purity),
- (4) In the matter of Prayer (to God),
- (5) In the matter of Zakat (or mandatory poor-due or charity),
- (6) In the matter of fasting,
- (7) In the matter of *Hajj* (or pilgrimage to *Ka'ba* in Makkah that is a symbol of God and of His Mercy on earth),
- (8) In the matter of recitation of the Holy Qur'an,
- (9) In the matter of remembrance of God, invocations, and supplications, and
- (10) In the matter of arranging the litanies [to invoke God for all of one's needs - both material and spiritual].

The second essential element relating to the mutual dealings [with all people] also has ten foundations [or principles]:

- (1) Manners of taking meals,
- (2) Manners of marriage,
- (3) Manners of trade and vocations,
- (4) Manners of seeking the lawful [and refraining from unlawful],
- (5) Manners of companionship,
- (6) Manners of seclusion,
- (7) Manners of journeys and travels,
- (8) Manners of recitals (“*Sama*” or devotional recital related to love and longing for God) and [resulting spiritual] ecstasy,
- (9) Manners of enjoining good and prohibiting evil, and
- (10) Manners for the rulers and the ruled.

The third essential element relating to the “*Muhlikaat*” (or destructive evils of the soul) also has ten foundations [or principles]:

- (1) Manners of [inner] self-discipline [and spiritual exercises to curb the base desires of the lower self (“*Nafs*”),
- (2) Manners of cure for over-indulgence in food and carnal pleasures,
- (3) Manners of cure of excessive talking and of evils of the tongue,
- (4) Manners of cure of anger and arrogance and false esteem,
- (5) Manners of cure of love of the world,
- (6) Manners of cure of love for property [and wealth],
- (7) Manners of cure of pomp and esteem (self-glorification and self-aggrandizement),
- (8) Manners of cure of show off and hypocrisy,
- (9) Manners of cure of haughtiness and self-righteousness, and
- (10) Manners of cure of pride and heedlessness.

The fourth essential element relating to “*Munjiyaa*” (or noble inner qualities of the soul that bring it salvation and felicity) also has ten foundations [or principles]:

- (1) Repentance [to God from wrongs one has committed and seeking God’s forgiveness],
- (2) Patience [over adversities] and gratitude [to God for Divine blessings and favors],
- (3) Fear [of God] and hope [in God],
- (4) Poverty [or state of absolute neediness before God] and asceticism,
- (5) [Good] Intention, sincerity, and truthfulness,
- (6) Devotion and self-accountability,
- (7) [Spiritual] Contemplation (or “*Muraqaba*” or contemplating God’s gaze upon one’s heart and self-reflection and critical self-evaluation),
- (8) Unity [or oneness] of God and trust in God,
- (9) Love of God, and
- (10) Death and its remembrance (or contemplating one’s own inevitable mortality and end of one’s worldly existence in order to put things in right perspective).

This is the list of essential elements and the fundamentals of the book “*Kimiya-e-Sa’adat*” or “Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success”. We shall explain the four titles and forty principles clearly and would restrain our pen from indulging in difficult phrases and complexities so that this book becomes easily understandable. It is so because anyone who wants to do research or to go deep into the complexities, may consult and study our Arabic books like “*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*” or “Revival of Knowledge of Path to God”, “*Jawahir al-Qur’an*” or “Jewels of the Qur’an” or other compilations on this discipline.

Ghazali then goes on to provide a marvelous exposition of the four titles (or requirements) and forty principles of this alchemy or transformative agent of eternal happiness and endless triumph. A detailed exposition of the same forty principles of alchemy of eternal bliss is provided in tremendous details by Imam Ghazali in his four-volume compendium of wisdom “*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*” or “Revival of Knowledge of Path to God”. Imam Ghazali provides details of the four requirements of alchemy or transformative agent of eternal bliss, after above introduction of his book “*Kimiya-e-Sa’adat*” or “Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success”. In his exposition of the first title or requirement for attaining eternal bliss and endless success, namely “Knowing One’s Own Self”, Ghazali writes ^[2]:

Knowing One's Own Self

Dear beloved! Beware that to get to know one's self is the key to the realization of God. Hence it has been stipulated by Him that:

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ

“One who recognized one's own self, has recognized one's Lord”.

سَنُرِيهِمْ ءَايَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ

“We shall show them Our signs in the farthest reaches of the universe and in their own selves (souls), until it becomes clearly manifested to them that this is the truth.” (Qur'an, Chapter 41, Verse 53).

Dear beloved! Nothing in this entire world is nearer to you than your own 'self' (*Nafs*). Therefore, if you would not try to be cognizant of your own being, i.e., of yourself, what else would you try to look in vain for? If you think that 'we reckon and recognize our selves' then you are surely mistaken, as such knowledge cannot possibly be of any use. It can, under no circumstances, be the key to the Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*), to the human attempt to the cognizance of the Supreme Lord and the Master of the universe (i.e., God). For, like this, even the animals know of themselves. They too can make out such visible parts of their body as their head, their mouth, their hands, their feet, and their flesh, etc., whereas you know of your other self to the extent that you take your meals when you are hungry, pick a fight with someone whom you are angry with and when urge of carnal desires overpowers you, you enter into matrimony. Hence, what is the difference between you and these animals? In fact, what you should know is, as to what you are, from where have you come from and where will you go? What is the reason of you having come here [in this world]? For what purpose were you created by the Lord? What, in short, is good for you and what is bad for you?

Even the birds and the beasts are endowed with the qualities you possess, besides some characteristics of the Satan. Yet, there are traits of your character in which you and the angels are at par. What then are your transient and permanent features? What is your genesis, the essence? So, unless you get to grips with these vital 'basics' about yourself, you will not be able to attain the status of the blessed.

Each one of these qualities has its own distinct 'food' that nourishes it, sustains, and promotes its growth, resulting in the promotion of goodness and the praiseworthy behavior. The betterment of the animals, as one would observe, lies in eating, drinking and in being healthy and strong. Therefore, if you are also an animal then you should follow their ways day in and day out, fill your belly to the brim and fulfil your carnal desires to the utmost.

Assault and killing are the principal characteristics of animals of the jungle. It naturally behooves them to do so, whereas the evil, its ramifications, villainous deeds, and the treachery are the signs and symbols of the devil. So, if you think you are also one of these devils, you should please your heart by following in their footsteps. On the other hand, unlike the animals and the beasts, to seek the magnificence of God is food for the souls of the angels. And if you are from the angels, you should, like them, try to behold the glory of God, so that you are freed from immoral sensual pleasures and arrogant anger on your fellow human beings.

Engrain the spirit in you then, to search for the truth in yourself. Do so with such dedication that you may realize that the uniform qualities created by God between you, the animals, the birds of prey and the beasts are for the common good, not in order that you too may become beastly and atrocious. The animals, birds, and the beasts have been made to serve you.

The discerning and the knowers of God have termed this status 'of being in the path of God and before God' as '*Janib-e-Ilahiya*'. People (i.e., common folk) call it Paradise. As such, it is your duty to become fully alive to the great, virtuous intrinsic worth instilled in you by God so that you may attain His Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*"). Indeed, one is the most unfortunate person, who, despite knowing the value of '*Deen*' (Path to God) happens to remain away from it.

Dear beloved! If you sincerely wish to have an insight into your inner self, know that God has produced you of two things, namely, the outer structure, the body which is visible to the eye and the inner self called the '*Nafs*' (self), '*Qalb*' (heart), or '*Ruh*' (soul). However, they can be seen through the eyes of the '*Batin*' (the inner being), i.e., by the other visible, unobvious self. This very verity is the main thing, the inviolable basis, the prime meaning of existence. All other things are subservient to it (i.e., to the heart). Hence when we talk of speaking our heart out, we really mean, the truth. Sometimes it is called the 'Soul' ("*Ruh*"). Sometimes it is termed as the '*Nafs*'. The '*Qalb*', the heart does not mean the lump of flesh situated in the left side of the human body which the animals too possess and even the dead has for that matter. This '*Qalb*', i.e., the heart is the real undeniable fact for mankind. It is the unique, genuine, and prime truth which, though manifest, cannot be perused by the human eyes. It pertains to the [seen or visible] realm called '*Shahada*'. It is a lofty domain. The goodness emerges from it in all its splendor!

This lump of flesh, the heart, is the knight-rider of the body. The rest of the body is its troops or subservient to its commands. The heart is the king and the commander of this force. Its principal duty is the attainment of the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God, the perception and acquisition of His sublime beneficence due to the inherent characteristics bestowed by Him in human being's heart to this effect. It throbs in His love. All the time it is vocal, reciting His praise, that He alone is worthy of being worshipped. Only He, it is continuously intoning, has the power to grant mercy or levy punishment on His people. Retribution and reward are only His prerogative, He alone

can bless or bar. Thus, wholeheartedly striving to possess the “*Ma’rifa*” or Gnosis of God is the key to this goal.

O dear beloved! You should understand that you should evaluate it, since your self is an invaluable gem par excellence. It has angelic kinship. The highest zenith is its heaven. It is a noble wayfarer on the path to the ultimate exalted goal of God. In this short journey through life, it remains in trade and agriculture and other vocations while travelling onwards [towards its final and ultimate destination] all the time.

Dear friend! Understand that unless you cast a glance within yourself, you will not be able to comprehend the truth about the heart (“*Qalb*”). Once you get to fathom the heart, thereafter you should search for its army, i.e., its invincible force. Then try to recognize the connection between the “*Ma’rifa*” (or Gnosis of God) and “*Sa’adah*” (or eternal happiness and everlasting success). The grandeur of the heart cannot be denied as such in comparison, to the superficial body, which is like a wooden frame, a mere dormant infrastructure. It is nothing. It is like the dead. By “*Qalb*”, i.e., the heart, we mean the veracity of the soul (“*Ruh*”). Without soul, the body is dead and cadaverous. Should one close the eyes for a while and banish all thoughts of one’s physical being, erstwhile fully visible to sight and get engrossed in search of one’s self, one’s soul, one would find one’s quest. Indeed, the real quest worth making is that of the heart. It would also apprise one of the hereafter. Barring whatever is to the contrary, one would simultaneously realize the immanence of the heart.

What is the ‘heart’? What are heart’s special characteristics? The Divine Law does not permit its academic debate. Hence Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and his noble companions have not broached the issue whereupon the following verses were proclaimed by God in Qur’an:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ ۗ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي

“And they ask you concerning the soul. Say, the soul is a command of my Lord.”
(Qur’an, Chapter 17 [Children of Israel], Verse 85)

أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ

“Behold, His is the creation (*Khalq*) and His is the command (*Amr*).” (Qur’an, Chapter 7, Verse 54)

In the realm of the “*Khalq*”, the creation and that of the “*Amr*”, the ordination is completely different from each other. The “*Khalq*” (the creation), the elements of dimensional measurement, the quantity and mass are imminent. In the dictionary, the meaning “*Khalq*” (or creation) refers to estimation. But the human heart cannot be put to this test, as it does not accept division. If the heart could be divisible, the premise could hold good, whereby it could either be a sage or a complete novice on an issue, at a time. Thus, a person being an “*Alim*” (scholar or person of knowledge) and “*Jahil*” (ignoramus) simultaneously is inconceivable. In antithesis, though soul (“*Ruh*”) has been created by God, it is likewise utterly indivisible, nor has it any relationship to the

code of the mass, the measurement, or the quantification. The “*Amr*” (command) is God’s Will, manifest and paramount.

Also, those who consider soul to be something which is far, distant, and ancient, having span, are all wrong. How can the span, which is circumscribed, not be subject to limitation and authority? When the soul is veritably genuine and overriding, how can the physical frame, the body overrule the soul? As such, how can soul be the “*Ard*” or the span?

Similarly, those who have called the soul the body, are self-contradicting and as such deceived. Surely, the body can be disintegrated into fragments but not the soul, which is indivisible as aforementioned. Raising a finer point on the issue, the soul in the animals is supposed to be dispelled in its final qualms but the real soul which we call the heart, is the grand venue of God’s Gnosis (“*Ma’rifa*”) but the animals are devoid of this [second soul]. Soul is neither physical body nor span but is a pure angelic gem whose assessment is difficult, not allowed to be broached or amplified. One can only have a fair knowledge of it within the prescribed parameters:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

“Those who strive for Our sake (in Our paths), We shall surely guide them to Our ways.” (Qur’an, Chapter 29, Verse 69)

وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُودَ رَبِّكَ إِلَّا هُوَ

“None knows the armies of your Lord but He.” (Qur’an, Chapter 74, Verse 31)

The above Qur’anic verses clearly signify that the heart has been specifically earmarked for the Hereafter. The yearning for the blessings of God is its objective. These blessings are dependent on the Gnosis of God. One gets an idea about the author or the producer of a thing by one’s product. The discerning senses of human being help one adjudge them, their worth. The sublime Creator’s works of the wonders of the world, each ingenious and unique in its own forte can, however, be appreciated and admired for their exquisite charm only through the acumen of the external and internal capability of discernment in the human being. The ostensible qualities of perception and penetration are mainly bodily functions in contrast, but the actual objective of the heart is the “*Ma’rifa*” or Gnosis of God which cannot be superficially achieved. The sensory capabilities of the body are thus the noose (i.e., “animal soul”), whereas the body is the upholder and the carrier of both, the noose and the rider (i.e., the real soul or the “human soul”). Hence the uniting frame (i.e., the body) is a prerequisite for the heart, which is made up of water, clay, and heat. Therefore, it is not so strong. It is exposed to the danger of death gravely due to the dearth of requisite food in the inner (“*Batin*”) and the outer (“*Zahir*”) being, due to the inner and outer wants, owing to the elements like the beast, like fire and water, as the basic evolutionary ingredients in human being. Therefore, it naturally craves for food to eat and water to drink. No wonder, it has all along felt the need for these two forces to combat the physical enemies on the one hand [that threaten human life and its wellbeing] and the greed and

the anger on the other [as these and other inner vices threaten the life and wellbeing of the soul]. These are forces of the inner. Hence, first comes the essence of soul, then its armies and thereafter the “struggle” (i.e., spiritual striving in the path of God) against these wicked forces of the inner. Hence, first comes the essence of the soul [also known as “human soul”, as opposed to the “animal soul” that contributes only to the life of human bodily organs and senses], then its armies or forces and thereafter the “struggle” or striving against these wicked inner forces (i.e., evils and negative propensities).

Since it is not possible to see the unseen things and pursue an unseen enemy of both the body and the inner self, hence the need for these sensory organs of the body and for inner sensibilities, became necessary. [Human senses of] Seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, and hearing are the basic sensory organs of the body. Each one of them performs a singular duty. If any one of them goes awry, it will hamper things and the matters of this world (i.e., worldly life) and the hereafter will be affected. These forces of the inner and the outer [human faculties] are under the control of the heart. God in His Supreme wisdom has made them subservient to the heart, as per His sublime pleasure, so that they may take care of the human body. It is so that the heart may get its reward, fetch its prey, be blessed [with the Divine bounty of Gnosis] and in consequence, accomplish its bargain for the hereafter. These forces of the good, serve with much marked devotion, as the angels do, and take profound pride in obeying God in profound delight. They never act against His wishes. The details about the heart are rather lengthy.

Dear beloved! To quote an example, the body is like a city, the hands and feet are like workers in this city. The desire is its prime mover (i.e., instigator). The anger is like city’s police chief. The heart is its king and the reason is its Prime Minister. The king needs all of them to run the government but the lust, which is a strong motivating force, is evil and provocative. On the other hand, the intellect, which is like the wise Prime Minister, always opposes it so that the funds of the government are not misappropriated or usurped. The anger, which is like the police chief is always erratic, reactionary, and overreaching its bounds. Under the circumstances, the king, who is above all of them, takes stock of all things firmly, consults its Prime Minister (i.e., intellect) and does not allow matters to go out of control. It clearly indicates that desire and anger play their respective roles [within bounds], and to nip the evil in the bud becomes the prime duty of the king. That is the position of the heart.

Food and water have been provided by God Almighty to protect the body. As such, they are the servants of the body. The body, in turn has been created to hold and bear the burden of the senses, i.e., these discerning agents of the sensations, hence they act as the servants of the body. These senses or sensory capabilities are as such the watchdogs of the reason to learn and assimilate facts for the discernment and true appreciation of God’s amazing, awe-inspiring creations. The intellect, on its part, is meant to act as their torch-bearing, glowing path finder - the guide to enable human being to relish blissfully the unique splendor of Divine Beauty – God’s Beauty par excellence, in what He has evolved and designed out of nothingness, in this universe.

So, if this (i.e., witnessing Divine Beauty) is the “Eden of the heart”, the intellect (or “*Aql*”) is its servant. As soon as a human being’s heart becomes fascinated in this manner and enchanted by His glory, one becomes the blessed servant of God. This is depicted in the following holy verse [from Qur’an]:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I (i.e., God) have created *Jinns* (supernatural invisible creatures that are present on earth) and human beings only to worship Me.” (Qur’an, Chapter 51, Verse 56)

God gave human being the heart and its kingdom to reign over. He provided one with the army - the force to do so, also the wherewithal to ride, in order to make one rise to the higher realms of grandeur. Therefore, if anyone wants to live up to the lofty grace of this exalted position and wishes to honor one’s pledge to God Almighty, to obey Him like a humble servant, one should worship Him with one’s heart and soul, and one should traverse the path prescribed to this effect. Under the circumstances, one should install oneself on the throne of the king and make being in God’s presence one’s ultimate aim. One must follow one’s heart, do good deeds and consider the hereafter as one’s real country of permanent abode. As such, one should treat this world as transient, a temporary passage for journey through life, for final rendezvous with God. One should consider the body as the riding mount, hands, and feet the servants, intellect the Prime Minister and the invigilator of the worldly affairs. One should take the anger to be the strict judge and should utilize one’s God-gifted five senses as one’s intelligence agents. One should likewise use one’s mind to sift the evidence thus obtained and safeguard oneself from all evil pitfalls and dangers in one’s way. The Prime Minister, which is the intellect, should similarly be made to oversee that all is well within its domain and that its force, its army does not revolt against it. One must chalk out such a plan so that one’s charge remains a haven of peace. This ensures that one will deserve blissful bounty and rich rewards from God. So much so, that one will soon don the crown of success promised to the faithful by Him. Otherwise, one will be counted among those who lost everything. Such a wretched person will be taken to task and retribution will be one’s lot.

Consequently, one should deduce that each person has the direct connection with the forces of the inner being, the soul. For this purpose, one is endowed with special qualities and characteristics. The bad qualities and characteristics ruin one, while the good ones raise one to the high grounds of the fortunate. Although multifarious, four amongst these dispositions (or inner qualities) can be treated as of principal categories in human being:

- 1) The characteristics of the [wild savage] beasts,
- 2) The angelic qualities,
- 3) The Satanic vices,
- 4) The traits of animals.

For instance, the human greed makes one subject to unholy impulses while the normal urges, like those of eating, drinking, and resorting to fulfillment of natural sexual

instincts, also possessed by animals, remain common to both (i.e., between human beings and animals). On the other hand, the [savage] beast-like qualities of human being of attacking and rending one's enemy apart by physical mayhem, are stimulated by an uncontrollable rage, resulting in serious altercations, petty quarrels and in slandering and abusing those one cannot tolerate.

In contra-distinction, the intellect, the wisdom in human being prompts one, to do seraphic deeds with underlying objective of doing the good and forestalling the bad, to please God. Such a person promotes the education (awareness and enlightenment) of people, helps them in many ways and is generally a ministering angel for one's fellow human beings. One appreciates the Divine truth and considers ignorance and bad behavior [towards anyone, being wrong and] undesirable.

As such, these particular inclinations of character, can be broadly symbolized with the scoundrelly hound-like trends, swine-like ways, the Satanic vices, and angelic habits. The dog for instance, is not ugly to see, but is apt to be unruly by habit. So much so, that at times it starts barking at its own kind. In the same manner, the pig is not the ugliest of the creatures, but it is generally abhorred owing to its latent craze for the dirty and defiled things. The very word swine is a severe word and an anathema. The Satan and the dog are similarly situated. The human being also has these traits. This is what is meant by "Satanic qualities". Its opposite is "angelic qualities". These terms means being Satanic or being angel like, respectively.

That is why, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) stated, "A devil is virtually present in each person. I am also not immune to him but God, the Merciful, has superimposed and overpowered me over him. He (i.e., the devil) is helpless [against me]".

Likewise, the human being is under orders and obligation to try and overcome the swine of lust and licentiousness and the cur of carnage and wild infuriation. The human being should, therefore, countermand all that is wicked and vicious. Undoubtedly, one who does so will be honored with such rewards by God, which accrue due to such outstanding behavior. Likewise, the ugly habits of bad character will lead one to ill fortune and [well deserved] punishment by God [out of sheer Divine justice].

One can visualize the condition of such a person. One would find oneself standing hand-cuffed before the dog, the swine, or the Satan. It stands to reason that if a believer is handed over to an unbeliever, the treatment that will be meted out to one is obvious. And if an angel is handed over to the swine, the cur or to the Devil, his condition would be worse than that of the believer. To one's utter dismay and chagrin, the human being accursed with the trait of worldly wrath will find oneself in the shape of a horrid hound or a wolf and the one who has fallen prey to the lusts, will see oneself in the form of a swine, on the Day of Judgment. If a wolf is similarly seen in a dream by someone, it would mean that the person is a tyrant. In the case of the pig, one can infer that one is dirty and degraded. The farther a person gets from them and their like, the more one's general demeanor and inner self will conform to how one conducts oneself.

Now that we know of the order-givers of the inner self, cast your eyes within on your inner self and try to assess for yourself as to which of them have influenced you the most and where you are situated. Beware that your acts and deeds will create in you a corresponding character trait which will make or mar you. Indeed, nothing but the good emerges out of the good. Likewise, if you are obedient to the swine of desire, you will have similar habits of profanity, shamelessness, avarice, flattery, filthiness, and that of being happy over the wickedness of the others. However, if you succeed in suppressing the swine [like qualities in your inner self], getting the better of it, you will be crowned with the qualities of contentment, grace, wisdom, piety, and selflessness, etc.

In case you are overtaken by the hound of horror and dread, then the damaging [inner] traits that will develop in you, will be those of being rash and unmindful of consequences, impurity, bragging, arrogance, wanton flaunting of your faults, taunting and torturing others, picking up fights and squabbles with others. Nevertheless, if you prevail over this dog of destruction, you will acquire the added qualities of patience, suavity, forgiveness, stability, bravery, tranquility, and saintliness (inner purity).

Likewise, if you obey the devil, whose prime task is to aid and abet the cur and the swine, to mislead people by his nefarious designs, to resort to trouble making, dishonesty and adulteration, etc., you yourself would inherit these devilish qualities from him. But if you are able to defeat him by not being taken in by his guiles and keep on fortifying your forces of the intellect and the good, you will attain wisdom, Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*), knowledge, profound sagacity, capability and a beautiful inner character and outer demeanor (*Husn ul Khulq* or *Husn al-Ikhlaq*). These noble traits will be your constant companions and guides. They will sow the seeds of your good fortune with veritable grounding of good memories of you, forever.

In contrast, the bad deeds are called sins or vices. In their contra-distinction, the good deeds are called *Ibadah* or worship of God. The heart is like a luminous looking glass or a polished mirror. The evil ways are like clouds and darkness. The bad character sullies and darkens the mirror of the heart. A person having such a character, can never have the benign blessings of God's Presence or witnessing God. One cannot be blessed with the blessing of sublime view of His beneficence. Verily, a lofty integrity of character is like light (*Noor*). Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

اتَّبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ تَمْحُهَا

“One should perform a good deed after bad one so that it may remove its bad effect”.

That is, one should perform a good deed soon after a bad one [that was done without realization of what one was doing due to ignorance, heedlessness, or under a wrong influence]. Only the one who will come purified of evil will be blessed. On the Day of Judgment, a human heart will either be bright or dark. Only the one with a shining face (representing the inner beauty of the heart) will be blessed:

إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

“Except for the one who comes to God with a sound heart.” (Qur’an, Chapter 26, Verse 89)

Right from the beginning of creation, human being's heart is solid like steel of which the translucent heart is made. One can see the entire universe in it, provided that it is safely guarded and not allowed to be tarnished. God Almighty has ordained so:

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“No indeed, what they have been earning has caused rust upon their hearts”. (Qur’an, Chapter 83, Verse 14)

Dear beloved! You may say that since human being also possesses the traits and the characteristics of the beasts, devils, and animals, then how come the angel-like qualities are one’s assets while the other things are transient? How can one ascertain that the human being has been created to have the character of the angels and in reality, has nothing to do with other things? The answer lies in the irrefutable fact that the human being has been created as “*Ashraful Makhluqat*” or the most superior of all of God’s creations. Thus, one is superior to the animals and the beasts. No doubt, the stature bestowed by God on each thing is the culmination of His Kindness towards it. For example, the horse is superior to the donkey as the donkey only carries weight, whereas a horse gallops bravely in the battle to the consummate command of the knight-rider, although in its own forte, the horse can also carry weight as the donkey does. Hence, there is a marked difference between them. If the horse did not have these qualities and a more graceful bearing, its stature would also have been reduced to that of the donkey to all intents and purposes.

Similarly, some people think that they have been made to eat, drink, and fulfil their urge for carnal pleasures. People of this kind waste away all their lives in such hapless pursuits. There are others who believe that they have been born only to belittle, degrade and overpower their adversaries and their fellow human beings. The winner or the vanquished, force majeure is applied to gain supremacy over them, whether they be Arabs, Turks, or Kurds [or any other race or ethnicity for that matter]. Obviously, both of these ideologies are wrong, since the aforementioned life of only eating, drinking and sexual conjugation is despondent on the element of desire. Even the animals have such desires. The camel is well known for its quality to consume huge quantities of food and water, whereas the pig has excessive carnal capabilities. How come then that the human being is regarded higher in status to them?

Also, the drive to overcome and subjugate others is due to a rising temper and anger. This natural phenomenon is also present, in may be argued, in the grazing animals and the wild creatures of the forests. Hence again, how come the human being is superior to them? Where is the difference and distinction [between human beings and animals]?

The answer is self-explanatory that despite it (i.e., low base qualities that human being shares with animals), the redeeming quality the human being has in comparison, is that the human being, among all of the creations, is blessed with intellect, with which one also recognizes one's Supreme Master, the God. It also enables one to voluntarily appreciate and admire His handiwork, His creative genius. It also helps one to defeat one's mortal enemies, the wrath, and the greed. These (i.e., the lack of wrath, greed, and other base qualities of the lower self) are characteristics of the angels. Their very qualities make one rise above the [level of] birds, beasts, and animals. Hence, human being is superior to all things created and has a conspicuous edge over them. All of them are at one's beck and call. One is most superior of all created things ("Ashraf al-Makhluqat").

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِنْهُ

"And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, all from Him." (Qur'an, Chapter 45, Verse 13)

As such, human being's greatness lies in the greatness of one's integrity, to the extent one excels in the stipulated virtues, the greatest of all achievements being the "Ma'rifa" or Gnosis of God. The rest of the traits pale down in comparison, although innumerable noble motivating forces (capabilities) have been bestowed upon human being for one's glory. As such, it is food for thought that when human being dies, the evil salient traits like the [low base] desire and anger also die. What remains [of human being at and after death] is a 'gem' of high quality which is ornate in a seraphic manner with the "Ma'rifa" or Gnosis of God. It is one's constant companion. This gem is also the friend of the angels, who always humbly prone, prostrate in worship before Him, all the time:

فِي مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ

"On a seat of truth, in the presence of an Omnipotent King." (Qur'an, Chapter 54, Verse 55)

Or, when a human being dies, the remains of one is a dark, blind thing - dark and tarnished on account of one's vices, but blind because of the absence of anger and arrogance which used to soothe and satisfy one ego [in the worldly life]. As a result of it, one dwells in this lowly realm inherited from the former region thereafter:

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُوا رُءُوسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ

"You would see the criminals with bowed-down heads before their Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 32, Verse 12)

It means that one will be in such a state when one will, in consequence, be sent to the "Sijjeen" (lowest and the most grievous realm of existence in the afterlife) with the Satan. The interpretation of the term "Sijjeen" is not known to all. Hence, God has ordained:

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سَجَّيْنٌ

“And what do you know what the ‘Sijjeen’ is?” (Qur’an, Chapter 83, Verse 8)

The wonders of the world of the heart are unlimited. The exalted status, the veritable pedestal of pioussness that the heart has in comparison with all the organs of the body is on account of the fact that the heart is novel per se, but most people are unmindful of it. The grandeur of the heart and its piety is on account of two principal reasons:

- 1) Due to “*Ilm*” or knowledge, and
- 2) Due to “*Qudra*” or power and capability.

The greatness due to knowledge is in turn owing to two causes: One is known to all and is self-evident while the other is hidden and subtle. No one can fathom it. The capacities and the power of the heart to assimilate knowledge with all its intricacies is within its scope. Although it is indivisible, it can easily read and comprehend numerology, arithmetic, medicine, astrology, Divine Law, etc. It encompasses all forms of education, which are contained in the heart like sand is in the desert. Within no time, it covers the distance from the earth to the sky and from the east to the west due to its continuous movement and sagacity. Although it’s on the ground, it measures the far reaches of the vast horizons and is aware of all stars and constellations in the galaxy and the distances between them. It takes out the fish from water by a tackle, shoots birds down from the sky to the ground, makes animals like camel, horse, and elephant obey one’s command. The five sensory perceptions of the body are its vocation. It’s evident that all of them are directed towards one’s heart. They are the doors to discernment in the spiritual realm (realm of the souls), a door is open in the heart [towards the realm of the souls]. Most people, on the other hand, only care about the material world (the physical realm) and consider these physical sensibilities as the only course to the attainment of knowledge.

Actually, these two doors are rather small, nevertheless, there are many doors in the heart which are open to receive many kinds of knowledge and education. Of the two premises, let us take the first, i.e., when one goes to sleep and has a dream, these sensory organs become dormant but the door of the heart opens up, with the result that in the realm of the souls and “*Loh Mahfoodh*” or the “Preserved Tablet” (i.e., God’s Book of Records that contains the knowledge of the past, present and future), one starts seeing things destined (of which God is already aware) or gets to know of what is going to happen in future. At times, one gets indications of things to come for which interpretation is to be sought. This is despite the fact that, as a rule, it is thought that one who keeps awake is more worthy of the “*Ma’rifa*” or Gnosis. Yet they realize that, generally speaking, there is less likelihood of their coming to know these things of the “*Alam al-Ghaib*” (the domain of the unseen and unknown) by dint of these sensory agencies.

It is not possible to dwell on the subject of these dreams in a casual vein but let it suffice to say that the heart is like a clean polished mirror and the Preserved Tablet (“*Loh Mahfoodh*”) is like a mirror in which the pictures of all things in the realm of physical existence (“*Alam Maujoodat*”), the realm we are in, can be seen. When the clean polished mirror [of the heart] is placed facing these facsimiles, they become clearly visible. No wonder then, that as such, when the heart is like a clean polished mirror and one disconnects one’s self from deflecting stimuli of these sensations [from the physical realm of existence], one gets in close proximity to the Preserved Tablet (“*Loh Mahfoodh*”). As long as the heart is filled with such veritable sensations, it strolls around in ecstasy in the spiritual realm (“*Alam Ruhani*”). However, in the dream, these sensations cease but their image or thought lingers on. Whereas in “*Alam Mithal*” (realm of imagination), the feeling or thought can be conceived, although at times, rather dimly. When human being dies, the veil is finally lifted. No perceptions or sensations [from the physical realm] remain. The matter (i.e., the truth, reality, and real nature of things) becomes transparent. The deceased is then told:

فَكشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

“Now We have removed from you your veil and today your sight is sharp.” (Qur’an, Chapter 50, Verse 22)

One replies:

رَبَّنَا أَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ

“Our Lord! We have seen and heard; return us [to the world] and we shall do righteous deeds; we are now sure [with certitude about the reality of matter].” (Qur’an, Chapter 32, Verse 12)

The second proof of the door of the heart being towards the “*Alam al-Malakut*” or realm of the angels is that there is no one who may be immune to prudent thought and pious misgivings or fear of the likely straits ahead. Such thoughts do not emanate from the senses, but they emerge from the heart. One does not know the origin and source of these anticipated dangers. This analysis confirms that all knowledge does not emanate from the sensory organs. Furthermore, the heart actually pertains to the “*Alam Ruhani*” or realm of the souls and not to this [material] world. Obviously, these sensory organs have been made for this world. Unless human being gets rid of this world’s mundane considerations, one cannot make a smooth passage to the next one, where these sensory organs would be of no use whatsoever.

Do not, therefore, misconstrue that unless a human being goes into deep slumber or dies, the door of one’s heart to the realm of the souls will not open. If one works hard, overcomes arrogant ire, purifies oneself, i.e., one’s soul, of the evil, closes one’s eyes, sits in a secluded place, exterminates all worldly thoughts and engrosses one’s heart and soul most devotedly in the realm of the souls in such a manner that one does not utter a word by one’s tongue but every fiber of it intones “*Allah, Allah*” (i.e., God’s one and only personal name, whereas, “*God*” is a generic language specific way of referring to the Supreme Being who is the master, creator, sustainer and provider of everything

that He brought into existence) with every heartbeat, continuously until one becomes completely unaware of oneself and the entire world except God, the door of the blessings in one's heart will open up and will remain open. One would see in the state of wakefulness what others would do in sleep. Beautiful souls of the angels would descend on one in picturesque shapes. One would start beholding the prophets of God and be benefitted from them. The heavenly creatures of this world and next of the "Malakoot" - transcendent angelhood, would be visible to him. One, who is so fortunate would witness strange visions and supernatural things, far beyond one's conception. This saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) is about such a person. It elucidates that such things are possible without the human being being asleep or dead:

رَوَيْتُ لِي الْأَرْضُ فَأَرَيْتُ مَشَارِقَهَا وَمَغَارِبَهَا

"The whole earth was shown to me, so I saw its Easts and its Wests".

The following verse from the Holy Qur'an also bears on the issue:

وَكَذَلِكَ نُرَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

"And thus, We showed [Prophet] Abraham the Kingdom (dominions) of the heavens and the earth." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 75)

The assured beliefs and the sound judgment of the prophets were similar. It had nothing to do with senses, rather, the stately achievement was the fruit of their hard work in the cause of God. God has proclaimed:

وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلاً

"And devote yourself to God devoutly (with utmost sincerest devotion)." (Qur'an, Chapter 73, Verse 8)

Indeed, when such be the case, He sets everything right. He alone is All Competent:

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا

"Lord of the East and the West; there is no god but He, so take Him for the Caretaker [of all of your affairs]." (Qur'an, Chapter 73, Verse 9)

Therefore, when you depend upon Him and in Him only, then divest all [your] connections with everything other than Him and you will have nothing to worry about [as He is the best disposer of all of your affairs]:

وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَأَهْجُرْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيلًا

"And bear patiently what they say [in terms of lies, hurtful things, attacks, allegations, abuses and criticisms] and forsake them graciously." (Qur'an, Chapter 73, Verse 10)

Such preeminent virtue is displayed in the strenuous exercise of the steadfast in their indefatigable toil and hardiness to be perpetually dutiful to Him. It purifies human being's heart. One rises above all fears of enmity of the people and the luring snares of the worldly cares and cravings. To be the proud possessor of such knowledge, achieved after such hard work, is the enviable good fortune of the singularly blessed, the "*Wali*" or the friend and intimate of God. One is installed on a high pedestal. The status of the prophets of God is nevertheless higher to them for the obvious reasons.

Do not, however, be misled that the acquisition of such [a lofty spiritual] state applies only to God's Prophets. In fact, every person in one's own right is capable of it. For example, there is no iron, which, due to its own basic intrinsic character, may not be able to be molded into a polished mirror in which one may be able to see the face of anything in the world. That, it may later be tarnished and sullied is another matter. Naturally, the worldly greed and temptations do a lot of damage to it and deface the [polished] mirror [of the heart]. Evil is such a menace [that it covers and deforms the polished mirror of the heart that no longer remains capable of reflecting the truth and the light of God].

Human being should not restrict oneself to a superficial understanding of reality and truth. [Instead,] One should realize that in one's vocation, in one's learning is the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God. This is what [true] knowledge means. Nevertheless, the knowledge in itself is narrower and smaller than the heart. The heart is the rider of the body [and not the vice versa]. Heart's purpose is for the rider to ride its mount. The horse (i.e., body) is for the rider (i.e., the heart) and not the rider (i.e., the heart) for the horse (i.e., the body).

Understand that nothing is nearer to you than your own self, but you fail to do so. The person who does not know one's own self and claims to know other, is like that pauper who cannot feed oneself but professes to have the poor and the destitute of the city at one's dining table. Such a claim is absurd.

The purpose of this discourse is that one should realize how great and privileged one's heart is. God has bestowed this tremendous blessing on you but kept it hidden from you. If you do not explore it, [but instead,] waste it, remain negligent to it, it would be a matter of great loss and lament for you. It is, therefore, incumbent upon you to strive hard to acquire the truth - the virtue of this great Divine gift. Rather than losing its quest in the ordinary pursuits of this world, seek its culmination [and ultimate purpose] so that you may be regarded and respected in this world and in the hereafter. That is, God may grant you such status and stability that there may not be any instability after it, that you may get such strength that there may not be any weakness after it, that you may be consecrated with such "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis that the proximity of Divine Beauty may be your enviable fate. You may be blessed with such bliss that there should be nothing to retard it. The veritable status that you may achieve as such depends on your performance and the capability you may be able to acquire to deserve it.

This is very essential. Otherwise, if you analyze matters, you will see that there is no greater misery than to be in the humility of heat, cold, hunger, thirst, sickness, and distress. The things one enjoys doing, may at times be harmful to one. Those things that one thinks may be beneficial to one, may be fraught with cares, stress and strain. Hence, one needs to tread with care.

A venerated person, we [all generally] know, is a person of honor due to one's knowledge, power, accomplishments, the strong will, the grit, and the good profile. At the same time, as far as a person's knowledge, learning or education is concerned, if we cast a meditative eye on it, we will find that one is the most ignorant of all, i.e., if even one vein in one's brain is distorted, there is a danger of one going mad or even that of one's death. One does not know its cause or treatment. Furthermore, the medicine for its treatment may be lying right before one's eyes but one may not be aware that this very medicine is the cure of one's malady. Regarding one's power, one is so helpless that sometimes one cannot even kill a fly. For that matter, if a lion is ordained by God to do so, one is killed by it. If a wasp stings, one becomes restless. Similarly, one loses one's grip, becomes much worried and restless over it even if a small amount of silver is lost. So, does one lose one's balance, if one must go without a morsel of food for some time. Thus, who can be weaker than a human being? Speaking about one's handsomeness and beauty of one's general demeanor, it can be compared to the over-extension of a leather tent on a pile of mud. It's also a known fact that if a person does not take a bath for two days, one would start stinking; be avoided by people and be generally disgraced in public, in addition to several other complications that may set in. There is nothing dirtier than the human being, as dirty matter remains in one all the time, that one carries with oneself and washes it many times a day.

A parable has been quoted that once Shaikh Abu Saeed (May God be pleased with him), a highly respected saint and Gnostic, was going somewhere in the company of some *Sufis* (people who strive in the spiritual path for inner transformation to attain Divine proximity). They reached a place and saw that the people there were performing the job of cleaning the human excreta. The path was littered with stinking dirt. Everyone was taken aback at the sight of that, muffed their noses and ran aside here and there, but the *Shaikh* (spiritual guide) remained standing there and said, "Listen, O People! Do you know what this pile of filth is saying to me?" They enquired, "What?" He replied, "It is saying that till yesterday, I was in the market in the form of fruits and sweets, etc. People were spending money lavishly on me. I remained in their bellies overnight then I turned into this obnoxious smelling rot. Should I run away from you, or you from me?"

The fact is that human being is weak, imperfect, and helpless in this world. One would nevertheless be in full swing on the Day of Judgment. Under the circumstances, if one retains the "*Kimiya as-Sa'ada*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Eternal Happiness and Endless Triumph" with one, one will rise above the status of animals and reach the stature of the angels. But if one fell prey to the world and to the worldly desires, the dogs and swine will be better than one, because they would be dissipated

[and gone forever] but human being would remain submerged in Divine retribution and sufferings due to one's own evil deeds one did in the worldly life. It means that if the human being has recognized the immensity and loftiness of one's status, one must simultaneously remember the harm and loss that is likely to accrue to one, if one fails to live up to it. To do such a stock-taking of things, is the key to the "Ma'rifa" or Gnosis of God. All this should be sufficient for one to recognize one's [own] self.

Knowing God

Imam Muhammad al-Ghazali continues his marvelous exposition of the alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal happiness and true abiding success in his book "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success", by explaining the second of the four titles (or requirements) of this alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal bliss which is "knowing God". In explaining the second requirement for transformative agent of eternal bliss - "knowing God", he writes ^[3]:

Dear beloved! It is stated in the [Divine] Books ordained on the previous prophets [before Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] that God has decreed:

أَعْرِفْ نَفْسَكَ تَعْرِفْ رَبَّكَ

"Recognize your own self, you will then know your Lord."

Also, this dictum is very well-known since the times and treatises of the Hadith (Prophetic narrations) and the companions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ

"One who has recognized one's own self, has recognized one's Lord."

The heart of human being is like a [polished] mirror [provided the dust settled on it has been removed and surface cleaned of anything that impedes its function as a polished mirror]. One who focuses one's sight and attention on it, will become cognizant of God. The point is, there are people who keep on admiring themselves futilely without looking into this mirror hence they get nowhere near getting to know their Lord. Again, the answer lies in seeing this mirror of the heart which possesses the "Ma'rifa" (Gnosis) of God in its right consonance. Hence, to know the reality of the heart in the right perspective is necessary of the two conspicuous aspects of it. One is very difficult to understand because it is beyond the comprehension of the [ordinary] people. Therefore, it would be better to not broach it. The other aspect is, one should try to gain an understanding of Almighty God by one's own self, i.e., through the special characteristics dwelling in one to this effect. That is, one should try and delve into the study of that Supreme Lord's bounties and beauty of creations spread in the vast expanses of the entire universe along with what He has kindly granted to the heart of

the human being in the kingdom of one's body and in its organs. One must contemplate fully on one's origin to begin with, that one was a mere nonentity at first and that now one is a 'being'. It is proclaimed in the Holy Book (Qur'an):

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُن شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا ﴿١﴾
 إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

“Has there come on human being a time when one was not a thing to be [even] mentioned? We created human being from a mingled sperm-drop; then trying one, We made one hearing and seeing.” (Qur'an, Chapter 76, Verses: 1-2)

One would realize from one's humble origin that one was a mere drop of impure water which did not even contain the qualities that were later endowed on one, such as those of intellect, hearing, seeing, taste, touch and speech. Nor did it contain the ears, eyes, tongue, hands and feet, head, veins, tissues, bones, or spine etc. In short, one's genetic being consisted of this whitish drop of water only, in its nascent form.

One's contemplations along those lines will further tell one that despite the human potential to ascend to such lofty heights, one did not come into being of one's own accord and of one's own evolution. One did not produce oneself. One was created by someone else. In one's own forte, one cannot even fabricate a single, solitary hair. One is utterly helpless. After all, one was in one's very essence, nothing but a drop of unclean water. So how can the quality of creating oneself be ascribed to one? It goes without saying that such an introspection will give one an enlightenment into the reality of one's being and of one's Creator. Leave aside the elegant splendors of His creations in the universe, when one will look into the superb organism of one's body, its various functions, each having its own peculiar quality and function, one would come to realize the magnificence and unparalleled adroitness of the Master Creator, the God Almighty.

One must thank the Lord for many things. God has also gifted one with a pre-eminent soul and a handsome body. One's beautiful profile alone should make one bow before Him in profound gratitude. One is thus fortunate to have been given both the “*Jamal*” or beauty and the “*Kamal*” or excellence and the bounty by none other than God alone. After all, what is one otherwise? Nothing but a handful of dust! God has created nothing without purpose. Every part of human anatomy is essential, has a special duty to perform in the manner prescribed. Each one of these components has been expertly produced, planned, and programmed [for specific functions peculiar to it]. Nothing is missing and wanting. So perfect is the entire constitution that it cannot be excelled in any way. For instance, look at the teeth in the jaw. The front ones are pointed and sharp to help one cut and pierce the edibles adequately. The others near them are rather wide, groovy, and flattened to enable one to grind them into fine digestible particles. The lower portion under the tongue moistens the morsel of food thus formed, making it more malleable for easy and safe passage through the throat. In the same way, human palm has five fingers. Four fingers are similar. But the thumb is placed at some distance from them. It is shorter and a little thicker than them. It has the faculty

of coordinating and working together with each one of them and also of working together with all the fingers collectively, for good grasp and handling. In turn, each finger has three pores, but the thumb has two. The human being can move and twist these pores at will. By bending them single handedly, one can cup the palm. By uniting and twisting the pores of both the hands, one can use them as a hollow plate. Likewise, by closing these pores and the palm of the hand, one can convert it into a sort of boxing glove, to fight one's enemy. On the other hand, one can utilize it as a platter with straight palms. Any debate, therefore, about the position, size or the quantum of these fingers would be an exercise in futility. So superbly have they been made! The Supreme Architect of all these things and the universe is the Best Judge. He knows all about everything He has evolved.

Human being's needs and wants are unlimited. The Creator's creations are also unlimited. Human being needs clothes to wear, a house to live in and scores of other things. The natural elements like the rain, air, heat, cold and land to grow the food in, have likewise been produced for one. The essential metals like tin, iron, bronze, etc., have also similarly been provisioned to human being to assist one to make one's tools and implements for different purposes and industries. All these things and many others are there for one for the taking, to benefit from them, to lead a comfortable life. Should human being then not become curious enough to ultimately feel the presence of the Omnipotence of Him, who in His supreme kindness has done all this for one [even without one even realizing and asking for them]? Should human being's heart not be enriched with His love and in His worship? According to a *Hadith Qudsi* (a prophetic narration that has been attributed to God for its source), Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of God be upon him) has stated [that God said]:

سَبَقَتْ رَحْمَتِي عَلَى غَضَبِي -

“My Mercy has prevailed upon My Wrath.”

According to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him): “The mercy and kindness of God on humanity, is far more than that of a doting mother on her suckling baby.”

On a comparatively lower scale, a simple but a good human being, sees the “*Ma'rifa*” or Gnosis of God in such things:

1. In one's own creation from the humble origin of a drop of water.
2. In the uncanny traits of the organs of one's body.
3. In the provisioning by God of all one's wants and needs.
4. In the beauty of one's physical constitution. The aesthetic things created by God in one which give one an appealing and attractive appearance.

God likes such a person and blesses one with His “*Ma'rifa*” or Gnosis. Such an evaluation of one's own self, becomes a key to God's Gnosis (“*Ma'rifa*”).

The Universe in You

Human being strives to understand the thing one does not know. One tries one's best to understand God by the internal and the external qualities one possesses. Whereas one's effort is laudable, the fact remains that human being's comprehension and capability is limited, no matter how exalted one's status may be. One's unabated research in this connection will no doubt enhance one's standing in life; the more and more refined one's heart and the "*Nafs*" (or self) become immersed in this process, by one's great love for Him, one will consequently attain relative nearness to Him but one will ultimately fathom the truth that "only God knows God in totality" and that He cannot be encompassed.

For example, the heart of human being, the "*Nafs*" or self, in reality, cannot be quantified. It has no dimensions. It is indivisible [and hence above the constraints of quantification, limit, and limitations of the dimensions of time and space]. It has no color. In short, it is above all such considerations. How can one, in such a case, determine the shape of such a thing? How can one visualize such a thing whose form or bearings are not known? Therefore, it does not tally with any quality in human being which may correspondingly discern it.

There are many things in human being which one feels but one cannot understand them. Love and pain, for example, can be felt but they cannot be seen or conjured up in mind nor do they have any shape, color, or size. The matter is rather complex. Different discernments and conditions felt by human being, pertain to different constituents of one's senses. For instance, we know that the voice is akin to the ear. The color is seen and appreciated by the eyes. The tongue recognizes the taste and the nose smells the odor. The redeeming common factor, the intellect may have something to do with it. A book of inductive logic may perhaps be pertinent to the issue to an extent but surely not to the heart and its special endowment which is a subject in a different class altogether.

God is everywhere. But His presence cannot be circumscribed to a particular place, to the exclusion of the rest. His presence and command are felt everywhere. The soul cannot be felt singly in relationship to any organ of the body. It cannot be said that it is in the hands, in the feet, in the head, or in any other part of the body. These bodily organs are divisible as aforementioned, but heart and soul are not divisible. Logically, a thing that is indivisible, cannot be contained in anything that is divisible.

By saying, however, that the heart and soul bear no relationship to any organ of the body, it does not mean that it does not have an impact on them. As a matter of fact, all parts of the body are subservient to it and under the direct control of the heart, the soul, or the "*Nafs*" or the self of human being. The soul of human being is the king in this context in so much as the entire universe is under the direct control of God Almighty, the King of the universe and all existence.

The subject of soul is very delicate and subtle. Despite all deliberations and discourses on it, it is a unique and a well-guarded secret. Hence, it cannot be broached beyond a certain limit. For instance:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ

"Verily God created Adam [and hence the entire humanity that emerged from him] on His own image."

This is where one has no other alternative but to say that God knows best.

We have hitherto determined that:

1. God is Omnipotent. The beneficence of His great Divine qualities of supreme excellence are manifest in Him.
2. He is Omnipresent but presence cannot be considered restricted to any one place to the exclusion of any other place or places.
3. Knowing the self is the key to His Gnosis or "*Ma'rifa*".
4. The real purpose and objective of human being is to attain His Gnosis or "*Ma'rifa*".

Now one would like to understand as to how. He is the Supreme Ruler, the Supreme King in the kingdom of human being. There are many enigmas to be unraveled:

1. His giving commands to the angels. Their humble obedience.
2. His ordinations from the Heaven above and their supplicant compliance of earth below.
3. The continual motion of the stars and constellations.
4. The grant of the sustenance of His living creatures for their subsistence by Him (from the heavens above).

These are cogent questions pertinent to His Gnosis. These matters and the like come under the purview of what is called the kind "acts of His Beneficence".

In this thesis, we have determined many courses that lead to His Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*"). Now we would like to know of the Gnosis of His Divine actions ("*Af'aa'*"). In other words, unless you come to know of the way human being rules the kingdom of the body, you would not be able to understand how He, the Master of all masters, reigns Supreme over the entire universe. Hence again, we come to the inevitable conclusion that unless the human being gets to know one's 'self' and each act of one is guided in this perspective, one will not be able to resolve the mystery.

For example, when you intend to write down "*Bismillah*" (Arabic expression for "In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful") on a piece of paper, your heart desires to do so first, then the heart (i.e., the real heart and not the physical organ on the left side of the body also called the "heart") stirs to this effect and orders the brain to have it implemented. The first sensitive chamber of the brain which is the place of

the human “*Khayal*”, i.e., the conjuring up of the thought of it, does it. The concept of the thought is conceived. It is imparted by the brain to the muscles of the brain which spread and extend it to the body; the writing fingers get directed, the veins and their tissues receive the message to this effect, in turn they hold the pen and inscribe the words according to the stimuli received. The other sensory organs also aid and abet and “*Bismillah*” is written. Hence, it is possible to infer that the entire transaction took place on account of the basic ‘will’ to do so. In the same manner, in the inception or the beginning of everything this ‘will’ or “*Irada*” is of the essence. When it is attributed to God, this ‘will’ is called the ‘Paramount Will’ of God.

In so much as human being’s will first emanates in one’s heart and there onwards it reaches other quarters [of the body], likewise the paramount Will of God and its influence, first starts from the “*Arsh*”, i.e., the Dominion of Divine Omnipotence, then it reaches other positions and people. Furthermore, the ingenious manner in which this concept of the will reaches human brain via the delicately fine fibers of one’s heart, one’s soul; likewise, this inviolable gem of God’s Will, His “*Irada*” or ‘Will’ is conveyed by Him from the “*Arsh*” (or “Dominion of Divine Omnipotence”) to the “*Kursi*”, the “Heavenly seat of Supreme Divine Excellence”. This gem par excellence is manifest in His Angel or “*Ruh al-Quds*” (the holy spirit). Same as the dominion of the brain is subservient to the heart of the human being, similarly, the impact of God’s orders is conveyed to the “*Kursi*” through the subservient realm of His ordainment, for immediate obedience and compliance. The entire process described in the previous chapter, from its advent of the thought of writing “*Bismillah*” (“In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful”) in the heart, its final execution, is likewise initiated by the “*Jauhar Talif*” or the “Uncanny Volition of God” in a majestic way, which actuates the stars and other constellations in the galaxy, assigning them their desired roles. Consequently, by their radiation (rays), based on their intrinsic potential, the atmosphere is stirred to create weather conditions like the heat, the cold, and the autumn season, etc.

Also, as the pen sets the ink in motion to assimilate and foregather scattered words to give it the united form of “*Bismillah*”, in the same way, the heat, cold, water and dust set their compounds in movement to gather valid forms constituted by their interaction to give matter their various shapes, the heat and dust to amalgamate them and the dryness to cohere them.

When the pen moves to write, whatever is conceived to be written, its vision is formulated, which ultimately takes shape in the words that are penned down. In the same way, when the inherent values of the above-mentioned compounds are set in motion, thereafter, through the agency of the angels, the forms of the animals and other vegetation are visualized in accordance with the transcript of the above referred to as “*Loh Mahfoodh*” (the Preserved Tablet that contains a complete record of all creations and existence and all happenings pertaining to them). In view of the loftiness of “*Arsh*” (simply “Throne” but in reality, it is the Dominion of Divine Omnipotence), the “*Loh Mahfoodh*” (the Preserved Tablet) and the “*Kursi*” (the Heavenly seat of Supreme Divine Excellence) many people think since times immemorial that God resides in heaven at “*Arsh*”! In the Chapter of [Prophet] Jonah (*Surah Yunus*) in the Qur’an, it is stated:

ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَدْبِرُ الْأَمْرَ

“Then [God] established over the Throne, managing the Affair.” (Qur’an, Chapter 10, Verse 3)

Talking of those endowed with “*Kashf*” or spiritual unveilings, one can say that their word has its value:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ

“Verily, God created Adam on His own image.”

Beware then that as the saying is, “only a king knows the real worth of a king”. If you yourself were not a king in your own domain and if God had not blessed you with a semblance of His mercy in you, you would never have gotten anywhere near to His Gnosis (“*Ma’rifa*”). Hence thank that Almighty King who has created you and crowned you with the kingship of your realm.

Your “*Arsh*” (throne) is the animal soul (‘animal soul’ is separate from the ‘human soul’ which is the most superior part of human existence). Its source is in the heart. Your “*Israfil*” (the angel who will blow the trumpet on the Day of Judgment that will bring everyone back to life; soul when brought back to life, has the potential to rejuvenate, resurrect, and reinvigorate every aspect of human existence) has been made of it by God. Your “*Kursi*” (seat) has been constructed likewise of the thoughts. Eyes, ears, and sensory elements are like the angels. The brain is like a canopy. Its dome, which has been made of your perceptive constituents, is your sky. After clearing away all base concepts from your heart, it has been installed as the reigning king over all parts of your body. After having so much done for you, you were told to never even for a moment, neglect yourself or your kingdom. Otherwise, this neglect is tantamount to ignoring the orders of God that will result in serious jeopardy of your position before Him:

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ فَاعْرِفْ نَفْسَكَ يَا إِنْسَانُ
تَعْرِفْ رَبَّكَ

“Then verily, God created Adam (the father of entire humanity and thus by extension, all human beings) in His own image. So, know yourself O human being! You will [then] know your Lord.”

The concept of the kingdom of man is derived in miniaturization from that of the Almighty’s Kingship and Kingdom over the entire universe. In itself, this notion contains the emphasis on:

1. The knowledge of human being's own self regarding the learning of the vital qualities and vocations of the different organs of the body that constitutes one's kingdom.
2. The knowledge of the Gnosis of God, His Kingdom in regards to God's Beneficent attention towards His angels, in turn the angel's relationship, to each other and the exalted "Arsh" (the Divine Throne), the heavens and the "Kursi" (the Heavenly seat of Supreme Divine Excellence) which is also a facet of unique knowledge of great merit.

An astute person will never remain unmindful and careless of them, as against a negligent fool who will only reap the harvest of one's wanton ignorance. Some of the 'Naturalists' and 'Astrologers' are unfortunately so ill-attained to their reliance on their limited education of the subject that as such they tend to attribute the eventual effect, the result of everything, in the effect of the stars. Their belief is so dogmatic, so pedestrian that in terms of this illusion, their state can be compared to that of an ant crawling on a piece of paper which may get the impression that the pen is creating a black trace on the surface [of paper], as it is going along listlessly. Another ant crawling on paper, having a higher vision, may extend the belief even further that the hand [holding the pen] is creating marks on the paper. This is the example of naturalists. The obvious fallacy of their [incorrect] belief lies, in their creed carried too far, that all human beings are irrevocably influenced by stars irrespective of all other facts. The antonym of fact is fancy or farce. Then astrologers easily forget that these stars too are in obedience to the angels, as ordained by God, the Supreme Master of heavens and the stars and of all that is in the universe and beyond. Their grasp is limited to the material things only. They are complete novices in the spiritual field which is superior to all physical worldly considerations. The stars of the physical (or material) realm have less brilliance than the resplendent light of the spiritual realm ("Alam Ruhani"). They know not that the soul rules over the body. Its opposite is not true. They are proud of their know-how and knowledge but in their absurdity, they remain devoid of the blessings of the path of the spiritual realm of the soul where many a luminous stars of the inner being ("Batin") mark a milestone in the course of God and the "Meraj" (spiritual ascension or the glory of the ascending heights to the path of God, as bestowed on Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]). God has accordingly proclaimed in the Holy Book (Qur'an):

وَكَذَلِكَ نُرَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ

"And thus, We showed [Prophet] Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth."
(Qur'an, Chapter 6, verse 75)

Prophet Abraham (Peace of God be upon him) exclaimed in reply:

اِنِّي وَّجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ

"I turn my face (i.e., my whole being - both inner and outer) to Him who originated the heavens and the earth." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 79)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has also said:

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ سَبْعِينَ أَلْفَ حِجَابٍ مِّنْ نُورٍ لَّوْ كَشَفَهَا لَأَحْرَقَتْ
سَبْحَاتُ وَجْهِهِ كُلَّ مَنِ ادْرَكَ بَصْرَهُ

“Verily, there are seventy thousand veils of pure light for God. If He had unveiled it, the rays of His Countenance would have burnt everyone who looked towards Him.”

The people of the knowledge of medicine have, likewise, based much of their practice similarly on the hot or cold effect of things. It has assisted them to an extent in the practice of their profession. The redeeming quality of the Creator in making the sun bright and hot, the Saturn dry and cold and Mercury even more hot, is not without its purpose. The poor astrologer, in one’s astronomical clairvoyance could, however, not fathom the ingenuity of their Creator in positioning the sun nearest to the earth, or variations of the day and night or for that matter, the humble obedience in duty of all stars and constellations in the sky to His Supreme Will. Such a one has omitted to give credence to their spiritual virtue with respect to their physical existence and known properties. Only if one knew that all these stars in the hemisphere are subjugated and subservient to the Will and Command of God, one would then not have believed so much in their physical aspect blindly:

الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحَسْبَانِ

“[At His behest] the sun and the moon run their appointed courses.” (Qur’an, Chapter 55, Verse 5)

وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ مَسْخَرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ

“And the sun, the moon and the stars are subjected to His command.” (Qur’an, Chapter 7, Verse 54)

A thing is considered subjugated which is harnessed and put under control and made to work. Like the human organs do for a human being. Each one of them have been assigned a function to perform. The stars too are servants of God, fulfilling His commands. In the same manner, as the brain directs the other organs of the human body to act in conjunction with discerning faculties endowed by Him to the human being, the stars also remain occupied in their stipulated performance through the angels assigned by God to this effect, performing the role of their directors and prime movers. In fact, these angels are the living heralders of many a thing in their stipulated spheres.

The ostensible cause and its effect, i.e., the result, matters only so much. The unqualified coincidences are all there to make people believe in things to the extent that their position can be compared to the legendary blind men who groped an elephant in the dark part by part, and rather than thinking of the whole, gave each one of them a different name based on erroneous judgement. The same applies to this astrologer, the clairvoyant, who similarly fallaciously considers a slave a master, the king. This very

thing is lucidly depicted in Holy Qur'an [through the words of Prophet Abraham (Peace of God be upon him)]:

لَا أُحِبُّ الْأَفْلِينَ

"I do not love those that set [as the sun does at sunset]." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 76)

The moon and the sun are conjectured to be God by the ignorant. The commanded are called the commanders until sanity prevails. There are twelve "Burooj", i.e., mounts in the celestial sphere. It can be compared to a lofty king sitting within his glorious chamber of grace with his "Wazir" (minister). Around him, in vantage ground are sitting the elite assistants of the "Wazir" (king's minister) in twelve distinguished heavens of peace, each having a door. Seven obedient but agile horsemen are hovering around each door at the beck and call of the assistants of the "Wazir" listening carefully to the summons received. For their immediate implementation, there are four men on foot standing at some distance from these horsemen, ready with their bows attentively watching these horsemen, thus fulfilling the instructions received by roping a certain group of people in and producing them before the high command. Then they are either punished or rewarded.

Accordingly, the "Arsh" ("the Dominion of Divine Omnipotence") is the abode of distinction of the distinguished minister ("Wazir") in charge of affairs, i.e., the favorite angel in the high heaven. This is in contradistinction to the mounts in the hemisphere of the stars as envisaged by an astrologer. These clairvoyants assign different meanings to the different position of the pawns and the paraphernalia on the chess board of the sky in the same manner as a physician deciphers the different ailments by different symptoms:

ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ

"This is their total attainment of knowledge." (Qur'an, Chapter 53, Verse 30)

However, when God's mercy overtakes such a sick person, the above-mentioned attendants attend to one, as stated and one is saved. The path of a prophet is star-studded in the same fashion and the "Wali" (saint, Gnostic or intimate of God) too performs miracles, in one's cure.

إِنَّ الْبَلَاءَ مَوَكَّلٌ بِالْأَنْبِيَاءِ ثُمَّ الْأَوْلِيَاءِ ثُمَّ الْأَمْثَلُ فَالْأَمْثَلُ
مَرَضْتُ فَلَمْ تُعِدْنِي

"Verily, Prophets are put through trials and tribulations, then the intimates of God ('Wali') then those who are their likes [but lower in ranks, all according to their spiritual ranks before God]. So, when I am indisposed, do not ask for my health." (Hadith or tradition of Prophet Muhammad [peace and blessings of God be upon him])

We also see some people who look very sick but are not sick. Actually, they are the people who have been reduced to such a state due to the love of God, Whom they adore so much that they look ill. Indeed, love is so self-consuming!

Now you should understand the meanings of the terms “*Subhan Allah*” (Glory be to God [who is above all imperfections and shortcomings]), “*Alhamdulillah*” (All praises be to God), “*La ilaha illallah* (لا اله الا الله)” (There is no god but God), and “*Allahu Akbar*” (God is Great [exalted above and beyond any comparison to any of the creations]) because they are inseparable conjuncts of the “*Ma’rifa*” or Gnosis of God.

In derivation, when you come to recognize your ‘self’ (“*Nafs*”), i.e., in the piety and virtue in you, you get to know the supreme piety and virtuousness par excellence of God and thereby understand “*SubhanAllah*” (Glory be to God). When you become cognizant of the Kingship of God by dint of being the king of your own domain and assimilate the truth of the grand Supremacy of God on the entire universe since everything is subservient to Him. Only then you can consider that you have come to understand the meaning of “*Alhamdulillah*” (All praises be to God). Verily, all praises and thanksgivings are due to Him and Him alone.

Now last but not least, you have to understand what the meaning of “*Allahu Akbar*” is. It does not simply mean “God is Great”. It means far more than that. It does not just mean that He is greater than others. He is the Greatest of all. Yet, no comparison can be drawn between Him and anyone else at all. He is above and beyond all comprehension. He is Infinitely Supreme. He surpasses and encompasses everything. He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent and the Most Beneficent! We come to know of Him and His many unique and splendid qualities and powers from His creative genius and His Holy Names. So great and unparalleled is He that we cannot possibly ever be able to describe Him or enumerate His Blessings.

The piety of God is not like the piety of human being. It just cannot be. It is we, who cannot find words, in the least, to describe His great attributes, and in doing so ascribe words or expressions to Him which are just not adequate since He is the Creator of all of His creations. So how can they be like Him? In the same way, God forgives us, when we draw a comparison between the kingdom of a human being over which one rules and the Kingdom of God over which His Reign is manifest, we do not mean that they are similar. It just shows how inapt we are, how helpless human being is and how Glorious is God! For instance, if a child asks us about the charm of ruling over a state and to make him or her understand, we reply that the same as you find in playing with your bat and ball, you can see how near or far we are from the truth. We have said so before and we reiterate that only God knows God in totality and no one else does. The best course to adopt for human being under the circumstances is to:

1. Get absorbed in search of His Gnosis (“*Ma’rifa*”) to the best of one’s capability.
2. To concentrate on His Beneficence and to look for His Light (“*Noor*”), His Beauty (“*Jamal*”), His Power (“*Qudrah*”) in His Divine qualities and creations.

3. To be thankful to Him for His kindness.
4. To worship Him with every fiber of one's heart and soul.
5. To obey His commandments.

We have all come from Him and to Him shall we return.

إِلَيْهِ الْمَرْجِعُ وَالْمَصِيرُ

“To Him is our return and the last resort.”

The more you love Him, revere him, worship Him, the more you will be blessed [by Him]. He likes those who are sincere, devoted, humble, loving, and grateful. Such noble conduct is sure to be rewarded [by Him].

أَنَا بَدَاكَ الْلاَزِمُ فَالزِمْ بَدَاكَ

“I am (i.e., God) your necessary inevitability so hold firmly to your inevitability.”

His remembrance (“*Dhikr*”) from the core of the heart can, only be fortified by detaching all [base] desires from one’s soul, giving up [all] vile deeds and by getting fully submerged in His worship. A sincere heart is peaceful and clean. The grandeur of a believer (“*Momin*”) lies in it:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

“The believers have succeeded [with real, ultimate, abiding, and eternal success].” (Qur’an, Chapter 23, Verse 1)

God has also specified that:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

“Surely successful is the one who purifies oneself [i.e., purifies the soul] and remembers the Name of one’s Lord and prays [to Him with sincere devotion].” (Qur’an, Chapter 87, Verses 14-15)

Knowing the World

Al-Ghazali continues his marvelous exposition of the alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal happiness and true abiding success in his book “*Kimiya-e-Sa’adat*” or “Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success”, by explaining the third of the four titles (or requirements) of this alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal bliss which is “to know the world and reality of worldly life”. In explaining the third requirement for transformative agent of eternal bliss - “to know the world and reality of worldly life”, he writes [4].

Dear beloved! This world is a path on which human being travels on one's journey onwards to the next [world]. It is an oasis at the end and foothold of a vast desert of the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis [of God]. This world ("*Dunya*") and the next world ("*Akhirah*") or the hereafter are two conditions. One state pertains to the human being's life and times (which is so near to one) till before one's death. The hereafter starts [immediately] after one's death. This world [and worldly life] is for human being to prepare for the hereafter ("*Akhirah*"). The purpose of this life is to collect a treasure of good deeds as one's earnings for one's sojourn here which will stand one in good stead in the hereafter. Although human being has been created rather weak and incomplete in one's genesis, one has been simultaneously blessed with such genius that by following the injunctions of God, one may be in a position to achieve the "*Kamal*" or perfection and excellence, acquire angelic qualities and see the Glories of God. This is the sum total of one's existence. This is the promised 'Paradise'.

The key to His Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*") lies in human being's gratitude for His great kindness towards one and in the appreciation of His innumerable bounties and in the cognizance of picturesque beauty of His creations. Human being's senses of perception make one taste and relish the ravishing things produced by Him, see the unique splendor of immense beauty, spread all around one in nature. One's ears make one appreciate soothing sounds and music [of the nature], one's hands make one feel the warmth of loving touch, etc. As long as human being is alive, one can enjoy all this and be grateful [to God for His immense bounties granted to one even without asking]. When one dies, one loses the freely rendered services of these intelligence [gathering] agents (i.e., the senses) which remain no more. Therefore, human being needs two things in life:

1. To protect one's heart from those things that kill one's heart. One should provide one's heart its food [and nourishment].
2. To protect one's body from the damaging effects of those things that [harm and] kill it. One should likewise provide it with its food.

In our discourse earlier, we have established that the food of the heart is the love and the Gnosis of God ("*Ma'rifa*") which is based on the dictum that the food of each thing is what it really likes and yearns to have based on its internal, natural characteristics to this effect. It must also be nourishing and sustaining. For that matter, even the body's care is also for the sake of the heart. For the body will ultimately perish but the heart will live [even after death forever]. A simple example can be given in this regard, as to say, the body is for the heart, as a camel (as the means of transportation in old times) is for the "*Haji*" or pilgrim [who performs *Hajj* or pilgrimage to the Sacred House of God, i.e., the symbol of God's Mercy on earth] in the path of God. One rides it and reaches "*Ka'ba*" (the Sacred House of God in Makkah). The reverse of it is not true, i.e., the pilgrim is not for the camel, but the camel is for the pilgrim. Naturally, the pilgrim will feed the camel till it reaches the "*Ka'ba*" [which is the goal and intended destination of the pilgrim]. Any let up or delay, any neglect on one's part on this account will be damaging to one's objective [of reaching one's intended destination].

Analyzing the matter further, the human body requires three things:

- a) Food
- b) Clothes
- c) House.

In other words, eating requires food, the need to cover oneself requires clothes, house is the place of sanctuary where one may remain sheltered from the onslaught of heat and cold so that the body remains protected from harms. In short, these three things are the basis, the elementary pre-requisites of the body, i.e., of one's physical existence. However, if the human being overeats, one may die. The desire of the house and clothes has also been implanted in human being for one's subsistence. The excessive demand of this nature may be harmful. Here the rationale, the commonsense comes to one's rescue and prevents one from over-indulgence in these demands of the body. The principle of goodness in which all moral values are included or from which they are derived, highest or supreme good that supervenes them, is the heart. Its food is noble. The more food the heart gets, the better it is for the soul. With the result that a heart nourishes well, with the love and the quest of God, finds its niche and rides the body like a knight rider who has the reins of its mount in one's hand. Hence, pay heed my friend and do not let its reins get loose. When you are fully in control of the body's lusts, the greed, the malfeasance, the unholy and misleading urges will be curbed.

The world comprises of three principal categories of things namely:

- 1) Those things that are found on earth like vegetation of all kinds, mines, and animals, etc. The land's surface in itself forms the basis of human residence, agriculture, etc.
- 2) The minerals like iron, steel, bronze, etc. are used for making implements, tools and other apparatus required by human being for various purposes.
- 3) Human being rides the animals and eats their flesh and maintains one's existence by eating other articles of food.

There are many other complexities. It is pity that in one's daily routine, one keeps one's hands and feet and above all, one's heart busy in them, as the total preoccupation of one's heart as such can be very harmful indeed. It can lead to the heart's demise due to forgetfulness of its true purpose and in its involvement in worldly greed, backbiting, anger, and similar evil pursuits.

Likewise, three professions - those of goldsmith (for metals), weaving and that of architecture are also of paramount importance. These vocations are not only interrelated with each other in some form or the other but are also actively associated with their subsidiary trades. Like the cotton pickers pick the cotton flowers from cotton plantations. Casters sift the fluff; cotton spinners spin them into threads and ultimately cotton weavers loom and weave them into different kinds of fabrics. These clothes are then stitched and tailored. The ironsmith makes tools with which the tailoring, stitching,

and sewing is performed. In this manner, people of different vocations work with each other.

Each is dependent on the other. Naturally, complications and professional jealousies set in. The tailor virtually becomes reliant on the weaver for the woven material and on the spinner, who spins it with one's mechanical devices fabricated in turn by a carpenter or an ironsmith, while one oneself also requires one's own tools and apparatus to tailor, for which again the ironsmith's services are required. This complex system of give and take, results in complications and rivalries, for which three principal things along with other factors which bear on the issue, are vital:

- 1) Political, in other words, tactical acumen and statesmanship.
- 2) The monitoring gear and the government.
- 3) "*Ilm al-Fiqh*" or the knowledge of law and the code of conduct as per the laid down rules and regulations in religion.

In final analysis, this infrastructure is for the realization and the accomplishment of the aforementioned three human pre-requisites, namely food, clothing and house or the place of residence. The rest follow them. These basic human requirements pertain to the body. The body in turn is for the heart, the soul. The soul has to mount the body like the pilgrim ("*Haji*") has to ride the camel to reach the *Ka'aba* (pilgrim's ultimate destination - the symbolic House of God in Makkah which is the symbol of God's Mercy on earth). In human being's case, one's goal is synonymous to it, i.e., to achieve the target of the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God. Instead of keeping one's goal of reaching the [ultimate destination of] *Ka'aba* in mind, if the aforementioned pilgrim wastes one's time while travelling, on tending to and taking care of the camel all along, one has only oneself to blame for one's gross negligence [that will prevent one from reaching one's ultimate goal and destination]. Dear beloved! Learn a lesson from it. Do not get involved in worldly affairs at the cost of the real aim and purpose of life. The time wasted in the world in idle occupations of life [and useless pursuits] will cost you dearly. Remember that this journey of life is actually a journey towards the hereafter ("*Akhirah*"). The charisma of this world is very alluring. Do not be taken in. Rise above the temptations of life. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has rightly stated that, "The world is a greater sorcerer than '*Haroot* and '*Maroot*' (the famous legendary sorcerers)". The reality [of the world] can be summed up as follows:

1. The first spell of magic cast by this world on you is that it makes you feel that this world and all its fascinations are there to stay all the time, whereas in fact, the reverse is the case. The time is fleeting, marching onwards continuously, though rather languidly, as you lose count of time in its happy moments. The passing time, its tread in the world is like a shadow. It always looks dormant like a shadow that looks still. You come to realize later that the shadow is no more where it was, instead it has shifted and moved away slowly and imperceptibly from its original position. Indeed, the world is in motion. Time and tide wait for none. Hence beware and do not let grass grow under your feet. A moment

gained is not lost but a moment lost is never gained. As it is, life is short. So why not make the most of it.

2. The second instance of the magic of this world is that it treats you as a cherished friend on whom it pretends to lavish its gifts of worldly love and bonhomie, as if like a faithful comrade it will always remain with you. It tries to enamor you by every enticing guile at its command into making you bank on it, that you are the only most adored object of its attention. But later when it leaves you in lurch, you are jilted and lost. You get a shock of your life. What happens is that like a beautiful lover of wayward nature, it leaves you suddenly, weaves its silken fetters on someone else, takes such easy preys to its perilous parlor and makes one taste death and desolation.

It is stated that once Jesus (*Isa* [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] or Jesus Christ), saw such an oft-married woman (which was an embodiment of the reality of the world) in the state of "*Kashf*" (spiritual state in which realities from the spiritual realm are shown in the state of wakefulness) and asked her how many husbands had she wedded? She replied that she had lost count. Jesus enquired of her again, "Did they die, or you obtained divorce from them?" She replied back with the answer that she had killed them all! Jesus could not help but remark, on hearing this woeful reply, "Pity be on the people who fell into your spell. They saw what had happened to their predecessors, yet they walked into your spell of beauty, to death and did not learn a lesson in time".

3. The third example in this context is that of an old woman who covers her face with an appealing veil, decks herself with gorgeous garments, decorate her profile in flamboyant fashion and puts on rare invaluable jewelry so that whoever casts an eye on her, may fall in love with her straight away. This is how the world behaves with human beings. It tries to cast such a spell on one with its charming beauty and raptures that one may get out of one's wits and gets stupefied by its armors. It casts asunder all thoughts and considerations of its arduousness. Human being forgets that life is hard and earnest. Sometimes one realizes it too late when it becomes a rude shock to one when the old lady masquerading as a femme fatale, removes her veil and one sees a hideous face instead.
4. The fourth example is that if someone were to try and calculate the period of time that has elapsed since the evolution of universe, the period when this universe was non-existent and the time period that is left from now on to its end, one will find that doing so is impossible and even to think of doing so is crossing the bounds of sanity. Simply, all that one knows is that his world is "from the cradle to the grave", i.e., the cradle is the beginning of his journey through life, through this world and the grave is its end. There are a few stops in between, one can say, comprising the years, the months, the days and finally the breaths one takes. Some cover a long distance and some small. Whether human being's [life in] world is long or small, one's life span is [in reality] short but one forgets this important point completely. One lives here as if one is going to live forever. How ironical that although one is not sure even of one's next breath, one plans

for things for the next ten years to come so that one may not feel their want or fall short of them. One may not even live to see that day!

5. Over-indulgence in the pleasures of life is as damaging for the hereafter (“*Akhirah*”) of human being as overeating is for a greedy glutton. A glutton pounces on rich, sweet, or hot, spicy, greasy food and devours it licentiously, not caring about the consequences of burdening one’s stomach with such heavy and non-needed food. With the result that one starts vomiting and having loose motions. For momentary taste and pleasure, one’s excessiveness puts one to such indignity, suffering and shame. Even the excrement after such a heavy course of meal, is sickening and obnoxious. It has therefore been observed that the more one indulges in the lust and licentiousness in this world, the more one is degraded in the hereafter. At the final hour in the last spasms of one’s breath, the more the human being measures money, gold, silver, garden, servants and maids in one’s home, the more severe will be one’s pangs of separation from them. On the contrary, a poor person will have no regrets. Such pangs of pain only add to one’s already deteriorating condition culminating in “*Adhab*” or retribution of one’s evil deeds.
6. Another extraordinary factor of life is that the affairs of this world have an imminence about them. They look like normal chores, routine and not difficult. Oblivious of all other concepts and considerations, human being becomes totally absorbed in them. One does not realize that there are wheels within wheels and wheels therein. One thing leads to another, resulting in one’s wasted life. Jesus (*Isa* or Jesus Chris [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]), has said that the seeker of this world is like that man who has his lips attached to the shore of the sea, eagerly absorbed in unabatedly quenching his thirst from it. His thirst seems to increase. The more he drinks, the more he desires to do so. Ultimately, he dies in this useless pursuit, remaining thirsty and unsatisfied. Such is the curse of the lust [for this world and its possessions]. Prophet Muhammed (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has remarked about such a person, “It is not possible that one may be immersed in water and not get wet”. Such a person of this kind, who has such a pronounced craze for this world, will definitely be sullied by it.
7. The seventh example about this world is like that of a guest who goes to a host who is very wealthy and is in the habit of lavishly treating one’s guests who came to one in large numbers due to the [excellent] quality of the reception. One serves them with sumptuous food in gold and silver platters of exquisite design and decor in the aromatic atmosphere of ebony and amber afire in silver stove. A sensible guest who happens to understand one’s nature, partakes of it gratefully, adds a little perfume of one’s own to it and takes one’s leave of the host gracefully, to their mutual satisfaction. On the other hand, a greedy guest tries to rob one’s worthy host of valuable belongings after one’s hospitality, and in the process gets nabbed and disgraced by one’s servants. The human lust and its depraved desires are lecherous. In this journey through this world, one’s own rightfully acquired possessions are one’s own true belongings which one can carry with one as one’s baggage. In this guest house (or hotel in modern times),

one can only benefit from the legal and the veritable. Avarice will do one no good.

8. The next example of the world, i.e., of its engaging nature is such that human being gets lost in it [in a state of fascination]. So much so that one forgets the hereafter completely. For instance, a group of people on board a ship. They reach an island on their way where they step for a while for a short respite, personal hygiene and to make ablutions. The captain announces that the ship must depart soon hence they should attend to all their needs quickly and re-embark the ship quickly. The sensible of them do so expeditiously, whereas the other group of the indolent, scatter here and there, go out of sight, touring the island unnecessarily, enjoying the scenic beauty of the place, its flora and fauna and colorful seashells. When they return, they find that the comfortable places on the vessel have all been taken. Therefore, they have to sit in dark and dingy nooks. The next group of people who come after them, bring a heavy load of these conches with them. They got worse places than their predecessors due to their similar wasteful excursions. They get so confounded that they hardly find any place to sit on board. In addition, they have to carry the load of these beautiful shells tied around their necks. After two days, these shells turn dirty and start stinking. What's worse is that for want of space, they cannot even dispel this burden. Equally heavy is their shame and repentance. The last group of idlers get so engrossed in exploring the island that in their vagaries, they completely fail to take notice of captain's call for quick assembly, miss their ship and die in wilderness.

In a nutshell, the first group of them is like that of the believers and last of them that of the unbelievers who are like those people who have forgotten God, His Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and the Day of Judgment:

استحبوا الحياة الدنيا على الآخرة

“They have preferred the love of this world over the Hereafter.”

The intermediary two groups are the sinners who erred against their better judgment and prescribed course of behavior. They suffer in this world and in the Hereafter. They get subjected to Divine retribution for their misdeeds.

Beware that this is not the condemnation of the world as such. After all, the world has been created by God, hence it cannot be without purpose. All things in this world are not bad. For instance, the “*Ilm*” or knowledge in itself and the “*Ama*” (performance of actions as per prescribed conduct) are two virtues of significance in their own right. So much so, that both of them are ostensibly in this world, but will actually accompany human being to the hereafter. For example, the knowledge of the “*Ma'rifa*” or Gnosis of God and its attainment is the culmination of human being's existence. The “*Ama*” or one's actions and good deeds have their own positive lasting effect, namely, the consequent purity and piety of the soul which comes from discarding of the evil and the nourishment of the soul by devoted worship of God. The constant perpetual remembrance of God is the everlasting reward of the human being:

وَالْبَقِيَّةُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ

“But the lasting deeds of righteousness are better in reward with your Lord.” (Qur’an, Chapter 18, Verse 46)

The lusciousness, the delight of the “*Dhikr*”, i.e., the remembrance of God is exquisite. We worship Him and enjoy its enchantment in this world but actually it does not pertain to it. It is the blessing of the hereafter. There is also a joy of this world that ends as soon as the human being dies. But the delight of His love and worship lives forever. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

الدنيا ملعونة وملعون ما فيها الا ذكر الله وما والاه

“The world and the worldly assets are anathematic. But those things that aid and assist a person in remembering God are blessed.”

This treatise on the world and its many traits is sufficient for the purpose of the present discourse. Its corollaries and other related matters will, God-willing, be discussed in due course.

Knowing the Afterlife

Al-Ghazali continues his marvelous exposition of the alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal happiness and true abiding success in his book “*Kimiya-e-Sa’adat*” or “Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success”, by explaining the last of the four titles (or requirements) of this alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal bliss which is “to know the reality of the afterlife”. In explaining the fourth requirement for transformative agent of eternal bliss - “to know the reality of the afterlife”, he writes ^[5]:

Dear beloved! Remember that unless you come to know the reality of death, you will not be able to understand what the hereafter means. The actuality of death, in turn, has a direct reference and bearing on life. The veracity of life lies in trying to comprehend the significance of the soul (“*Ruh*”) which, in other words, is tantamount to the knowledge of the self (“*Nafs*”). To all intents and purposes, the soul and the self are synonymous. We have, by now, already arrived at the conclusion that human being has been created in the form of a physical frame with its complete infrastructure and with the soul (“*Ruh*”). It is worthwhile to reiterate that the soul is the rider and the body is the mount that it rides.

The soul will be in Paradise or in Hell according to its form, the worth, irrespective of the body. It will either be consecrated or condemned. The heart’s invaluable assets, imbued by the Divine favor on the human being, without the body, are called “paradise of the soul”. God’s blessed person with such a soul, will be rewarded in the hereafter with beautiful palaces, gardens, and innumerable other delights [that no eyes have ever seen, and no hearts have ever imagined as per Qur’anic and Prophetic teachings]. In

antithesis to it, the soul in throes of agony and sufferings, owing to its own ill-deeds without the body, is termed as the “fire in the soul”. Its abode will be Hell. Thorny hedges and scorpions will be one’s co-mates. Greater details on the subject have been provided in this work’s companion volume [in my book called] “*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*” or “Revival of Knowledge of Path to God”. Not many people know much about the death on which we have touched here; people prefer to dwell more on the heaven and the hell rather than on the subject of death. It has been stated in “*Hadith Qudsi*” (traditions of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] in which he transmitted from God) that:

اعدت لعبادى الصالحين ما لا عين رأت ولا اذن سمعت

ولا شكر على قلب بشر

“For My righteous servants, I have prepared [such joys] that have not been seen by any eye, nor heard by any ear, nor even occurred in the heart of any human being.”

Furthermore, there is a window in human being’s heart that is open towards the celestial (or spiritual) realm through which it sees the mysteries of the unseen (“*Ghaib*”). It does not come to know them by hearsay, but it actually views them and sees the state of the blessedness in the hereafter or that of being condemned in the hereafter. It discerns vividly, the pronounced difference between the two conditions of being healthy or ill as a physician would do. It becomes fully alive to the virtue of taking proper medicine in illness and in that of following the preventions stipulated by the doctor, by desisting from things He has forbidden. This process is called the blessedness of the body (“*Sa’adah badania*”). Vice versa, the overindulgence, like over-eating and paying no heed to his doctor is bad and is called the illness of the body (“*Shaqawatu badania*”). The practical observation makes one behold clearly that the heart, the soul of the offspring of Adam, i.e., human being, has both, the virtue and vileness in it. The ‘cure’ to get the reward of virtuousness lies in the worship and the Gnosis (“*Ma’rifa*”) of God, while the curse, the venom of the vileness is contained in the stupidity of ignorance and in ignoble conduct [as noble ends can only be achieved through noble means and ignoble ends are the only outcome of ignoble means]. To acquire this knowledge, is to acquire great wisdom. Many of the people who have called themselves “*Ulema*” or scholars, are not only not learned in this knowledge but are also its opponents and deniers. Surely knowing a thing makes one learned (“*Alim*”) and an ignoramus for not knowing it. Yet, there they are. They know of physical paradise or hell only. To them, hereafter is confined to the hearsay or in following the ‘oft-followed’ blindly. Needless to add that we have penned down the facts in study and research of the subject based on sound arguments, in Arabic.

We can, under the circumstances, only add that an intelligent and astute person whose inward (“*Batin*”) or the soul is pure and unprejudiced, will find the righteous path leading to the judgment of the hereafter in its nascent truth, unlike quite a few people, who are completely in the dark about it.

To understand the truth about death, you must know that human being has two kinds of souls. The “*Ruh Haiwani*” means the physical, the animal soul. The other is called “*Ruh Insani*” which is the soul from the origins of the soul of angels in human being. The source, the delta, the fountain of the animal soul is that lump of flesh called the [physical] ‘heart’ which is placed on the upper left side of human being. It has following distinct features:

1. It consists of delicately naive febricity of physical conjugation of moderate nature.
2. The febricity or light feverishness which in its own genesis is rather moderate, emanates from the veins of the [physical] heart, reaches the brain and the other parts of the body.
3. It is pulsating.

In a nutshell, this is the animal soul which is carrying and conducting the onus of the medium and movement. When it reaches the brain, its warmth is reduced and becomes clement. The eyes can see through it and the ears hear. It gradually extends to all senses. The soul can be compared to a lamp. When it reaches the house, the walls around where it is placed are lit up. In the same manner, as this lamp enlightens the surroundings, the parts around it in a house, God in His Supreme Mercy confers light, the power to see in the eyes and the capability to hear in the ears by this soul and all sensory organs are capacitated (enabled).

On the other hand, if some vein gets affected and becomes twisted or knotted, it is apt to get paralyzed, listless, and dormant and the physician tries his best to see that this knot opens up and is removed somehow. In other words, the soul is like the flame of the lamp, the heart is the wick and food is the oil. Without the oil, the lamp is dowsed. Without food, i.e., the oil, the moderate temperament of the soul comes to a standstill thus resulting in death. If oil is there but the wick is using much oil, it means that it has become defective and the stage may be reached when it may not work at all. This is what finally happens to the heart - it becomes incapable to accept and assimilate its food. Likewise, if lamp is covered, it will get extinguished despite the presence of wick and oil. Similarly, an animal dies when it is seriously wounded.

Let us look at the example of the polished mirror. As long as it remains neat and clean, it accepts whatever is projected to it and mirrors it very satisfactorily. However, it cannot do so when it becomes dirty, tarnished, or covered with dust. The pictures and appearance of things do not become visible in it, not because they are not there, but because the mirror has become too soiled and hence incapable to reflect images.

Likewise, the capability of the medium to enable it to stir and of the sensibilities of the limbs in the animal soul, is on the account of its inherent natural temperament of moderation and also owing to its fine delicately naive febricity. But as soon as this trait of the clement nature, its temperance is lost, its forces that work as prime movers, cease to operate. Thus, this unique blessing of God is forfeited. The bodily organs stop functioning and human being is declared dead. The job of the angel, assigned by

Almighty God, known to us as “*Malik ul-Maut*” or the “Angel of Death”, starts. The cognizance of such matters is best known to him. We know him by hearsay as “*Malik ul-Maut*” or the “Angel of Death” but his real integrity is in the knowledge of but a few.

The question of human being’s death is, however, different. In addition to the animal soul described above, human being has another soul (“*Ruh*”) in one which is called “*Ruh Insani*” or the “human soul” or “heart”. This soul, unlike the aforementioned physical or organic soul, is on a much higher plane. Human soul does not accept division. Its importance and significance can be visualized by the fact that it can contain the “*Ma’rifah*” or Gnosis of God. Verily, God is also one and only. The division of His “*Ma’rifah*” or Gnosis, is also not tenable. Hence the concept of His “*Ma’rifah*” or Gnosis to be circumscribed in any bodily form, is tantamount to blasphemy.


Dear beloved! If for the sake of argument, we were to pre-suppose the presence of the wick, its flame and the light in human being, then we would only be able to ascribe the physical components of the lamp, namely, its structure and the wick to the animal form, then too we will not be able to connote its light to it as such, in conformity with the ‘human soul’ of the human being. It is obvious, because its former is transient, but the latter is not, i.e., the physical lamp’s light is subject to the lamp. If the lamp is shattered, its light will be extinguished. But human being’s real soul (i.e., the ‘human soul’) is never extinguished or obviated, although, one’s ‘animal soul’ may perish. In a way, the animal soul in human being is the mount of one’s real soul on which it saddles and gallops. It is also, the wherewithal, the apparatus for one to do so, to one’s benefit. Therefore, when this mount (i.e., the animal soul) perishes, human being loses its usage. Just as well, as in its absence, one gains more confidence and becomes more independent and self-reliant. It matters the least to one, especially during this period, as human being has worked so hard that one has already achieved some merit of reckoning and position of the noteworthy. To put a stamp of authority on this glory, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has also said that, “Death is a gift for a believer”.

The situation is similar to that of a hunter who is in the field with one’s hunting gear and paraphernalia. For the sake of argument, if one succeeds in getting the prey for which one has specifically come all the way but loses one’s gear [in that process], one is still better off. Alternatively, if one loses one’s hunting gear before one gets the prey, one’s condition would become worse to one’s chagrin [due to one’s failure to achieve one’s purpose]. There is a profound lesson in it for the same. Such a person meets one’s own failure at one’s own hands. The retribution of the hereafter overtakes one, resulting in innumerable agonies.

One may be paralyzed in certain limbs. One’s hands and feet may stop working. One should remember that one has just lost use of these instruments. What can’t be cured must be endured. Hence, as long as the human being, the master agent, is there alive, the importance of these organs is secondary. One’s truth, the reality is therefore not in them, not in the back, stomach or in the head. For that matter, even if all the organs of one’s frame, one’s body cease to work, desist from being one’s servants and do not

remain in one's control, yet one's immanence is possible, as the animal soul is not the same as the human soul. There are, however, two aspects to it which need to be re-emphasized namely:

1. In one type of existence [called life], the active participation of the body is essential. The hunger, thirst, sleep, etc. are the phenomena that do not take place or function without the physical form but die when the human being dies.
2. In the other existence [with only the 'human soul' or "*Ruh Insani*"], there is no existence of the body. This existence is the grand prix of God's Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*") of the pursuit of the Divine Beauty ("*Jamal Ilahi*"), His superb splendor and glory par excellence; beautiful, bewildering and so delightfully ravishing, that bliss stands stupefied in its supreme ecstasy. These are the everlasting blessings ("*Baqiyat us-Salihaat*") of which God makes mention in the Holy Book (Qur'an). These 'eternal blessings of the blessed, the ratified good' are unparalleled reward of God, for which the human soul should remain ever gratified. God's elite, the chosen have this quality to the foremost in their self ("*Nafs*") which automatically raises them to an ever-ascending high pedestal. Vice versa, the neglect, the ignorance and the foolishness are the other side of it which is tantamount to being blighted and the blindness of the soul:


وَمَنْ كَانَتْ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا

"And whoso is blind in this [world], shall be blind in the Hereafter and further astray from the way [of truth]." (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 72)

Unless, you tend to make out the difference between these two kinds of souls in human being, you will not be able to understand death.

The animal soul is in the order of the physical course, the crude being primarily concerned with rather vaporous genetics, as described earlier. Bile, fibrosis, and other excreta conjoin to form its compound. Their base elements are water, fire, dust, and air. Hence the resultant uniformity or variation marked by their interaction is attributed to the relevant heat, cold, moisture and dryness. The medical knowledge or its practitioner - the doctor - consequently remains fully alive to their significance.

They, however, do not know that in treating the body of their patients, they are involuntarily trying to make the physical frame of the body fit to be ridden over by the 'human soul', the real soul of human being. Angelic in nature, the "*Nafs al-Mutmainna*" or the refined soul of human being that has reached the level of inner peace and complete satisfaction, has grand characteristics. Human being's journey through life is not of one's own volition. One is ordained to do so, to show one's true worth of this path of pitfalls and make it with flying colors to the goal post and get one's reward of the hard work and tribulations, gallantly faced in this arduous passage [of worldly life] by one. God says:

قُلْنَا أَهْبَطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ۖ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

“We said: ‘Get you all down from here [i.e., from Paradise in God’s Presence; this was addressed to Adam and Eve] together; there shall come to you guidance from Me then whosoever follows My guidance, no fear shall be on them, nor shall they grieve.’” (Qur’an, Chapter 2, Verse 28)

God, the Merciful, has also added:

إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىْ خَلِقُ بَشَرًا مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿٧١﴾
فَاِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُۥ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِيْ فَقَعُوْا لَهٗۙ سٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾

“God told the angels, ‘I am going to create human being from clay so when I have fashioned the human being and breathed into one soul created by Me...’” (Qur’an, Chapter 38, Verses 71-72)

In this verse, there is a subtle reference to the difference between these two souls (“*Ruh*”). One has been attributed to the dust and the word there has been used to impart the meaning of its temperance in nature, whereas “*Nafakhtu fehe min Roohi*” or “I breathed into one My soul” is a delicate pointer to ‘His Own Self’. It is like making a torch of cotton wool to set it on fire to eradicate the germs of the disease.

The principal factor, it may be remembered, is the “Divine Law and code of conduct for the human being” which acts as one’s guide, the moderator, and the monitor. In final analysis, we come again to the same thing, namely, the essence of the existence of human being, being in one’s realization of one’s own self to gain the “*Ma’rifa*” or Gnosis of God. How to understand and recognize one’s self is the key to how to try and obtain the “*Ma’rifa*” or Gnosis of God. In the same way, to understand the truth about these souls, is to try to attain the knowledge of the hereafter.

The basic foundation of the faith (“*Deen*” or Path to God), among other pre-requisites, lies in explicit faith in God and His ordained ‘Day of Judgment’. Therein lies a secret recondite in its seclusion where we are not allowed to touch upon. Nor can it be understood or broached with ease as in its deep depths, lies hidden the “*Ma’rifa tul Haq*” and the “*Akhirah*”, i.e., the verity of the Most Supreme Lord and His promised hereafter. So, you may totally enter into and exhaust your wisdom in endeavoring to get its knowledge and understanding. Its research is so eerie, so uncanny, so intricate that it verges on the unfathomable to the extent that those who have heard the least about it were awe-stuck, got stupefied and declined to accept even the alphas and omegas of it and exclaimed that it is impossible, based on impiety of thought and on an utterly unworthy exercise in futility. Neither the Prophetic traditions nor the Holy Qur’an bears on the issue [explicitly]. Then how will you be able to dare to do so? That is why people just cannot listen to it. The prophets have therefore stated:

كلموا الناس على قدر عقولهم

“Speak to the people according to the level of their intelligence [and mental capacities].”

That is why some of the prophets were apprised by God, to not touch upon those characteristics of God Almighty which the people may not be able to understand because when they will not be able to comprehend them, they would decline to believe in them which would be injurious to them.

The truth about the real soul of human being ('human soul') has been described in detail. The 'animal soul' dies when the limbs of the body of human being become inert and lifeless. The 'human soul' remains manifest regardless [of life or death]. Therefore, the terms resurrection of human being, the day of judgement, the resurrection, do not mean in derivation that after 'nothingness', the human being would be brought to existence as such again. Rather, it means that one will be given the form, a new body, the way it was done formerly and then one would again be refurbished with the requisite characteristics and qualities. It would be very easy [for God compared to the first creation in which body and soul were both created].

They should realize that good deeds result in the purity and the grandeur of the soul. Why should such nonconformists fail to acknowledge, is beyond one's comprehension. One should, therefore, logically learn that the saints (Gnostics), the elites of God, consider themselves in journey through this world. Such a person, travelling on this path, trading and gathering the goods for one's profit and the non-profitable material to forestall loss, is actually carrying the good bargains made by one on the way to one's final destination, i.e., the Hereafter. One knows:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

“To God we belong and to Him is our final return (destination and homecoming).”
(Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 156)

Therefore, one remains fully alive to one's status of being in transit all the time. One's actual country is not this world. As such, one proceeds along this path collecting the final merchandise in one's sojourn at different halting points (stops) and milestones, fully aware that when one reaches one's goal, one would fetch a fair price for what one has acquired along the way thus far, in the country of one's permanent residence, the hereafter, for one.

There are four distinct stations or milestones in the travels of the soul. Soul is the reality of human being while body is not. Soul also has a resting place – the place it has originated from is its real home or country and it has come to this world in its travels and it has many milestones before it returns back to its origin. Every milestone in the journey of the soul, is a world in itself if seen with some philosophic contemplation. They are as follows:

1. The first milestone is the “*Alam Mahsusaat*” or the “realm of sense and sensibilities”.

2. The second milestone is that of the “*Alam Takhayyulat*” or of the “realm of conception [of thoughts and ideas]”.
3. The third milestone is that of the “*Alam Mauhumaat*” or the “realm of discernment of the undiscerned”.
4. The fourth milestone is of the “*Alam Ma’qulaat*” or the “realm of good order, achievement and self-awareness”. It is in this milestone that one gets awareness of the self or of one’s own reality and truth.

Let’s try to and understand their status by the following example:

1. As long as one remains or is in “*Alam Mahsusaat*” or the “realm of sense and sensibilities”, one is like a moth that hovers and hovers around the burning flame instinctively. The moth has the eyes but does not have the intellect to think and remember. The attraction of the moth for the burning flame is proverbial for its intrinsic trait to evade darkness and be inflamed with the love of the light. As it is not possessed with the power of balanced thought and safety, in its search for an exit in the illumination, it erroneously considers the burning flame to be that opening, with the result that it ultimately falls on the incandescent flame and dies. If the moth was endowed with the capability of reasoning, it would not have gone near the flame after first warm glow of it felt on its feathers. This dearth [of intellect] makes the moth not reach the status of any reckoning. For instance, in contradistinction, other animals try to shy away from a thing when they are hurt. The very sight of a stick makes them flee from danger.
2. In the second stage of “*Alam Takhayyulat*” or “realm of conception [of thoughts and ideas]”, human being dwells in the realm of cattle and feeble-minded animals.
3. The third realm is of the aforementioned “*Alam Mauhumaat*” or the “realm of discernment of the undiscerned”. At this level, human being comes at par with goat and horse, so to say, i.e., in antithesis to the feeble minded animals of the second stage, at this stage, one recognizes one’s enemies and tries to avert danger by natural impulses, namely, the endeavors to escape for one’s life, the moment one casts one’s eyes on a wolf or a lion, although one may not have seen them before. Something in one tells one not to dread a mighty ox, a camel, or a giraffe, although, they are larger in size than them. This instinct is naturally [and intrinsically] engrained in him by God. Yet these animals are not so intelligent, i.e., at that level where they may be considered to be competent to look after themselves that comes in the fourth stage.
4. The fourth stage is of “*Alam Ma’qulaat*” or the “realm of good order, achievement and self-awareness” as stated before. Till the third stage, human being remains in the domain of obscurity. It is actually from here that human being enters the status of being a human, i.e., in the realm of the glory of the human being. One sees such things in this stage where conjecture and superstition are totally eliminated.

In “*Alam Mahsusaa*” or the “realm of sense and sensibilities”, human being starts assessing and evaluating things in their right perspective avoiding the things to come. Here, one sums up the things as one sees them. Things have an entity, an identification. One tries to classify them correctly and generally succeeds in doing so. Naturally, in the world of “*Mahsusaa*” or the “realm of sense and sensibilities”, human being’s concentration is based on such feelings which are conveyed to one by one’s discerning sensations, like walking on the earth. But at the last, the fourth stage, it also implies one’s capacity to be able to do much more than that, like walking on water. This is the stage of ascendance of human being, the “*Alam Ma’qulaa*” or the “realm of good order, achievement and self-awareness”. Here in glaring comparison, one walking about could be based on the verity of facts of a different nature, accepted by one’s soul and as such capitalize in one being able to walk on water. This is the eminent status of the prophets and God’s “*Walis*” or intimate friends or saints, like walking in air. People asked Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), if Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) or Jesus Christ could water on water? He replied:

وَلَوْ إِزْدَادَ يَقِينًا لَمْشَى فِي الْهَوَاءِ

“If his conviction had been firmer, he would have walked in air.”

It shows that such things are in “*Alam Idrak*” or the “realm of conceivable or possible”. Thus, there are many stages of human being mounting the ladder of stature from the first rung to the last rung of eminence and acquiring angelic traits which took human being to one’s “*Meraf*” or the pinnacle of achievement and glory. There are many hazards in this ascent from the lowest strata of “*Asfalus Safileen*” (lowest of the low) to the zenith of the “*Aa’la Illiyeen*” (highest of the high) as is stated in the Holy Qur’an:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا
وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ﴿٧٢﴾

“We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and to the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it; human being carried it who was surely unjust and ignorant.” (Qur’an, Chapter 33, Verse 72)

There are various stages in the ascent of human being from the lowest status of animals and stones to that of the pedestal of angels. This is so because there is no danger in what’s on earth in “*Jamadaa*” or stones, growth, and vegetation. They do not know. Vice versa, the “*Aa’la Illiyeen*” or highest of the high are stationed at the height of their glory. It is not possible for them to descend from there, as is inscribed in the Holy Qur’an:

وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ، مَقَامٌ مَعْلُومٌ

“Every one of us has a known station there.” (Qur’an, Chapter 37, Verse 164)

Animals are amongst “*Asfalus Safileen*”, the lowest. Therefore, there is no progress for them. However, human being in the middle rung [of the spiritual ladder] is in danger. One can sink to the depths of the animals, to the lowest levels [to become like them]. One can also soar high to the heights of the level of angels (“*Malaika*”). The capability, the prowess to shoulder such grave responsibility of being “*Ashraful Makhlugaat*” or the best of all creations, is therefore a matter of the [true] essence [of human being]. It implies that only human being at one’s best, in one’s grand stature of being “*Ashraful Makhlugaat*” or the best of all creations, could accept the challenge.

The meaning and purpose of this treatise is, therefore, to look deeper into things, not merely to have a superficial look at what they superficially appear to be but to ascertain what they really are. This discourse about the purpose of human being’s journey through life is as such food for thought for those who wish to pick up the words of wisdom and concentrate on their intrinsic worth. There are not many works of this nature nor many people who may want to or be able to comprehend it. Hence, the present dialog on the subject should be sufficient.

There are quite a few people who are neither wise nor do they follow the Divine law. Such are the people who find themselves in doldrums about the state of the “*Akhirah*” or the hereafter. Rather they are doubtful about it. Actually, when the worldly desires take the better of them, it suits them to rebut the hereafter. They do so and make excuses to defend themselves. The devil supervenes them with its evil deeds, with all its charms and aids and abets them to think that the punishment of the Day of Judgment is a fanciful hallucination created to terrify people. As regards to the promise of the Paradise to the righteous, they also brand it as mere charismatic showmanship, a fantasy of mental fanfare evolved to put human being to hardships of dry, dreary lives and nothing else. Therefore, they look down upon the adherents of the Divine law.

Some people pretend to be above all such considerations while dressed in rags (a dress of humble *Sufis*). Such pretensions do not help them the least. Nor do they have any station of merit. Actually, such imposters do themselves as much harm as to other simpletons who get beguiled by them into considering them to be people of some spiritual status, which they cannot understand. In reality, they have no logic or arguments to support them. How can such people have any real concealed worth in them? They have nothing up in their sleeve. Under the circumstances, they should be told in no uncertain terms that if one hundred twenty-four thousand prophets, all the sages of the time, all the learned scholars (“*Ulema*”) and saints (friends and intimates of God or “*Awliya*”) were all wrong and only they are right, then there is nothing more to add to the subject in the light of their ignorance and arrogance.

One may say that maybe you are the one who is mistaken. Hence you could not understand the truth about the hereafter and God’s punishment (“*Adhab*”), the torture of the soul, the very precept of the “soul” due to the dominance of our sensory perceptions, accepting what is not experienced by the five senses, as wrong on such flimsy ground is not tangible. A person with such conceit, must be diagnosed immediately that one is not at all in one’s right elements especially when one says, “Just

as I know that two are more than one, I don't need to be told, I know fully well that there is no such thing as 'soul'. It has no permanence, and physical joy or pain can, under no circumstances, be considered in conjunction with the joy or pain of the soul". It is such people about whom God has said:

وَأِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَىٰ فَلَنْ يَهْتَدُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا

"So, if you call them to the guidance, even then they will not ever be guided." (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 57)

Suppose one advances the argument, "Why should I spend the rest of my life in the hovel of piety and unnecessarily restrain myself from the joys that the world has to offer me, when I have no clues on what you are trying to tell me about the verity of the soul and the hereafter since they look rather far-fetched to me? In any case, I am not aware of these matters". In such a case, the answer is that, "Now that you have accepted this much, why don't you follow the Divine law and guidance? It is based on logic that when you are not aware of a thing, you should not take any risk. Suppose you extend your hand to eat out of a plate and you are told that a snake has just put its mouth in it, you will immediately withdraw from the meal. This statement may be wrong, yet, the prudence in you will never make you partake of the food, no matter how delicious it may be. Likewise, suppose you are sick and in fear of your life and the person who writes the charms of healing ask you to give one a small amount of silver, so that one may be able to prepare the amulet for you, you will accede to this demand despite your apprehensions to the contrary. Also, if a clairvoyant tells you that when moon reaches such and such stage you should take some bitter medicine for your treatment. Despite its fantasy, you would most likely follow one's advice for your health, also on the ground that one may be right".

So how can one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets, scores of sages, learned scholars ("Ulema"), and saints or intimates of God ("Awliya") be wrong and hearsay, while a quack or a fortune teller may be right? This should induce the human being to reconsider one's position. It is likely that one may get inspired to do so on the basis that if these people are right then why should I deny the hereafter, may be that by not listening to them and indulging in worldly pleasures blindly, I may be irrevocably blighted in the next world. So why should I not step away now [from my untenable position that cannot be sustained]?

Hypothetically, if the entire world was to be filled to the brim with rye-corn and a sparrow was assigned the task to pick up one rye corn every one thousand years, still it is a moot point if the rye-corn would meet the eternity. So why take the risk of the punishment of the hereafter from here to the Day of Judgement, one should think. People make voyages in boats and ships and suffer hardships to sell their merchandise for their subsistence. Why should human being not do it? Piety, grit, and perseverance pays the striver good dividends.

Ali (May God's pleasure be on him) [a great companion and cousin of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] told an atheist in a religious

debate, “If what you are saying is correct then you will be saved and we will be saved but if what we are saying is correct [and what you are saying is wrong] then only we will be saved and you will face eternal Divine retribution”. Ali (May God's pleasure be on him) was a sage. He could not have advanced the argument more powerfully. He said so not because he had any doubt in what he was saying but he had so forcefully framed the premises of his statement in view of the mindset of the atheist.

Hence, we come to the conclusion that a person who remains idling (wasting) one's time in the worldly affairs at the cost of one's hereafter (“*Akhirah*”), one's hereafter is in peril. In the light of the strength of the strong arguments advanced here and the examples provided, it is appropriate for the dissenter to take no risks and be on terra firma (solid ground).

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَىٰ مَنْ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدَىٰ

“And peace be on one who follows the guidance.”

We have summed up the discourse on the Gnosis (“*Ma'rifa*”) of God, self (“*Nafs*”), this world and the hereafter. God-willing we will now explain the forty essential elements (“*Arakan*” or steps) for eternal happiness and everlasting success.

This is how Imam Ghazali ended his marvelous exposition of the four titles (or requirements) of the alchemy or transformative agent of eternal bliss and everlasting success in his great book “*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*” or “Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success”. He then provided the following introduction to the forty principles of eternal bliss and everlasting success ^[6]:

We have already dwelt at some length on the following:

1. The Gnosis (“*Ma'rifa*”) of God,
2. Knowing one's own self (“*Nafs*”),
3. Knowing the reality of the world (“*Dunya*”), and
4. Knowing the reality of the hereafter (“*Akhirah*”).

The secret of obtaining God's approval and His blessings, lies in worshipping Him truly and sincerely and in His obedience. Human being should consequently be careful to do the following:

- A. One should not only be the most humble and obedient servant of God and worship Him, but one should also have the bearing, the personality, the good demeanor of a good human being. One's general conduct would as such, become appealing to others [who are all fellow servants of God irrespective of their race, religion, color, or anything else like that], besides one's own self.

- B. This is as far as how a person looks. But that is not enough. One should also behave in society in such a way that one's conduct remains in bounds of the Divine law and guidance. One would then come to be recognized as such.
- C. The aforementioned constitutes one's outward conduct that others see. Now we come to his soul [or inner reality]. As such, it is incumbent upon human being to protect one's heart from the evil and its devastations [that it wreaks on one's inner being with ominous repercussions for one's outer being].
- D. One must not only take care of the above mentioned "don'ts" but also take full care of its "do's", i.e., having safeguarded one's heart, one's soul from the evil, one must at the same time garnish and adorn the soul with good virtuous and noble inner qualities.

Thus, by following the "don'ts" of not allowing in soul what is evil and injurious to it and by pursuing the "do's" of doing all those things that are good and pure and developing beautiful inner qualities of the soul, one will be feeding one's soul with food that is conducive to its wellbeing. Thus, one will be saved from the "*Muhlakat*" or the fatal effects of the inner evil and will be fortified by the "*Munjiyat*" or inner [sublime] qualities of the soul that purify, beautify and adorn it, of which one's soul would be justly proud of. These four essential elements [of the alchemy or transformative agent of change that bring about eternal happiness and everlasting success] are each divided into ten parts and are as follows...

At this point, Ghazali begins the exposition of forty principles (or steps) of eternal bliss and everlasting success. These principles cannot be reproduced here due to the length and readers are encouraged to get the translation of this great book, provided in the reference section of this treatise.

Inner Spiritual Transformation – Key to Finding and Reaching the Purpose of Life

The purpose of life, attainment of which is directly linked to eternal happiness and endless success, is expounded by Ghazali in his last book "*Minhaj al-Abideen ila Jannatu Rab al-'Aalameen*" or "Best Path for the Worshipers of God Leading them to Paradise of the Lord of all the Universes and Existences" or short title "Best Path for Worshipers". This short book defines a seven step path for reaching spiritual illumination and "*Ma'rifa*" (or Gnosis) of God, which is described by him as the real purpose of life. Imam Ghazali outlines the following steps in the introduction of his book "Best Path for Worshipers", argues that the purpose of human life is God's worship which is not possible without knowing God in the state of Gnosis or "*Ma'rifa*". Hence to have Gnosis of God is the real purpose of life and this is how one can proceed on the path of knowing and achieving the purpose of one's life ^[8]:

All praise is for Exalted God Who is the most Merciful, Who created with His absolute power, the earth and the heavens and set right the affairs of the universe with His

exclusive wisdom. From amongst His creation, He created Jinns and man for His worship and obedience, as He has said in Qur'an:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"I have created *Jinns* and mankind only for My worship." (Qur'an, Chapter 51, Verse 56)

Now the path lies very straight and illuminated before him who wants to follow the path of His worship and obedience. All kinds of proofs and guidance are clearly available to those who possess a discerning vision. However, it is only Exalted God Who has the exclusive power to guide on the straight path of guidance or to push into the darkness of error and straying whomsoever He wills. He knows very well who are following the straight path of guidance and who are in error.

Countless blessings and salutations of God on the merciful Messenger of God, Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), the leader of all the Prophets and Messengers (May the Peace and Blessings of God be upon them all) and on his family and descendants, till the Day of Judgment.

May Glorious God guide by His grace, all the Muslims onto the deeds which attract His approval and pleasure. Devotion and obedience to Exalted God are the fruit and object of the acquisition of all knowledge and learning. The great gain of life and the main goal of human existence, lie in the expression of servitude and submission to Him. This attitude of servitude to Exalted God consists in the provisions of life-journey for the *Awliya* (Friends and intimates of God and Gnostics), the path of powerful, the course of the dignitaries (i.e., spiritual achievers), the objectives of the magnanimous, the symbol of the pious, the profession of the righteous, the favorite of the wise, the path of fortune for the fortunate and the road to Paradise for those desiring Paradise. Glorious God has said:

وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ

"I am your Lord so worship Me alone" (Qur'an)

إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيِكُمْ مَشْكُورًا

"[It will be said to those attaining God's acceptance when they will enter Paradise], 'This is the recompense for the efforts you made [in your worldly life] that has been accepted with much appreciation [by God]'" (Qur'an)

When I looked closely into the path and pondered over it thoroughly, I found that it is a very difficult and hazardous path to follow. It is a path full of very wide and arduous

valleys and is blocked with obstacles and calamities. Highway robbers and hidden enemies (i.e., the lower self of man and Satan) are lying in ambush. There are only a few friends and helpers. As this is the path leading to Paradise, the Garden of Eden, it should indeed be difficult and hazardous. It is just according to the description given by the Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

أَلَا وَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ حُفَّتْ بِالْمَكَارِهِ وَإِنَّ النَّارَ حُفَّتْ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ

"Paradise has been covered with unpleasant and undesirable things and hell has been covered with desires and lusts".

In other words, he who desires Paradise has to pass through many repulsive and unpleasant situations in this life, and he who wishes Hell is absorbed in satisfying his lusts and desires. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has further said:

أَلَا وَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ حُفَّتْ بِالْمَكَارِهِ وَإِنَّ النَّارَ حُفَّتْ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ

"Beware! Paradise is situated on a high steep ground and Hell is situated on a smooth low ground".

This means that it is difficult to climb up to Paradise and easy to get down to Hell. In other words, the way to Paradise is very difficult and the way to Hell is very easy.

Apart from this, there is another problem that by his nature, man is very weak and the world is brought with all kinds of difficulties. Religious matters require full-time attention and man has inadequate spare time at his disposal for all this on account of all his occupation with the worldly affairs. Life is short and the calamities of the times are very severe and death is nearby. Man traversing this path must know that provision for the journey is indispensable which is nothing but worship and obedience [of God]. If anyone has not provided himself with this provision in this world, he cannot get it after death. One who has furnished himself with it, will reach the goal of success and will be prosperous in both the worlds. He who remains deprived of this provision is grievous in loss and is doomed to perish. So, this is a very difficult and hazardous path indeed.

Those desiring to take this path are very few. Fewer still among these are they who put into practice their intention with firm resolution. Those who are able to reach their goal are much fewer. However, those who reach the desired goal are honorable servants [of God] whom Exalted God has chosen for His acquaintance and relationship [of closeness and intimacy]. It is He who helped and protected them and admitted them into Paradise by His mercy, among such successful fortunate persons.

When I found the path to Paradise so difficult and full of hazards, I took care to make provisions and was able to find out the necessary supplies and needs. I am very hopeful that with these provisions and supplies, the journey to Paradise will, God willing,

be completed with success and peace. These provisions and supplies consist of ability to worship, to put this ability to practice, and to acquire necessary knowledge. All this can be performed only with the help of God. I have, therefore, compiled many books on the subject of undertaking successfully the journey to Paradise, such as "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God", "*Kitab al-Qurbati il Allah*" or "Book of Attaining Intimacy with God", etc.

All these books contain fine (i.e., subtle) academic issues and philosophical points which the general public could not grasp. Therefore, they began to taunt and offer adverse comments on these books. There is, however, nothing surprising about this attitude of theirs. There can be no composition better than the Holy Qur'an which is a composition of the Lord of all the worlds (i.e., all the universes and existences) but the imprudent people did not spare even this Divine Book from their adverse comments and said:

إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسْطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

"This is nothing other than the fables of the old [times]." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 25)

Thus, when they treated the Divine Book in this way, how could they spare from their taunts, a book of human composition. It is, however, appropriate for educated and wise not to dispute with God's creatures but to treat them kindly [irrespective of their wrong behavior]. I, therefore, prayed to God, the King of all kings, to help me in compiling a book to which all may agree and which may be beneficial to [all] the people.

The Sustainer of the world, who responds to the prayers of the helpless, accepted my prayer by teaching me the secret points and signs (i.e., subtleties) of *Deen* (path to God) and a totally unique setup (organization) for the compilation of this book which I am going to, with the help of God, state now. It is that when a man resolves for the first time to take the path of worship [of God], he receives from God, guidance and help. The Holy Qur'an refers to this help and guidance:

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ، لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ ۗ

"He whose heart God has expanded for Islam (i.e., path of surrender to the Will of God), is in a light from his Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 39, verse 22).

There is also a *Hadith* (narration) of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) which means the same thing that when divine light enters into one's heart, it creates in it spaciousness, capacity, and openness. The noble companions asked: "O Messenger of God! Is there any sign of this light by which it may be recognized?" He (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) replied: "These are feelings of distance from

the abode of fraud and deception (the world), turning to the abode of eternity (the hereafter) and care to prepare for death before its arrival". If anyone has these qualities and tendencies in him, it is a sign that light [of God] has entered into his heart.

When the intention of taking the path of worship arises in man's heart, he begins to think that he has been enriched with the blessings of Exalted God, with respect to, life, strength, wisdom, power of speech and many other blessings and means of comfort, bestowed upon him by God. With these, he protects himself from troubles, losses, distresses, and calamities. So, he begins to believe that there must be some Being who has granted him all these blessings and bounties and that, if he is not grateful and obedient to that Being, He will afflict punishment on him and take away His blessings.

He also begins to think that the true Benefactor (God) has sent Prophets (May the peace and blessings of God be upon them all) to furnish to the people knowledge about Him. These Prophets (May the peace and blessings of God be upon them all) displayed, with the help of God, supernatural miracles lying beyond human power and capacity. The Prophets (May the peace and blessings of God be upon them all) taught the people that theirs is only one sustainer Lord who has power over everything. He is All-Knowing, Everlasting, and Eternal. He has asked you to do good deeds and refrain from sins and vices. He is able to punish those who are disobedient and to reward those who are obedient. He knows the secrets of the hearts and the notions passing through them. He has promised to grant salvation and rewards. He has also warned the people against His punishment and torment. He has commanded them to be regular in abiding by the injunctions of the Divine Law.

All these directives and teachings create a firm belief in the hearts of the servants of God that all these assertions are quite possible from the rational point of view and nothing is impossible. The belief creates in the hearts of the people a fear of Exalted God and anxiety about accountability before Him. This fear and anxiety awaken them for carelessness and negligence, complete the final argument and dispel their pleas and excuses and urge them to reflect upon the signs of God. As a result, a sound-minded person searches for ways and means for his salvation and a place of security. All this shows him the way of acquiring knowledge about the Creator of the universe by reflecting with his sense and wisdom upon the universe and what it contains. He is guided to know the Maker of the universe by pondering over His creation, so that he can come to believe in the unseen and may know that he has only one Master and Creator who has imposed on him the duty of obeying the injunctions of the Divine Law, to strive for what is right and refrain from what is wrong. Thus, the first valley in the path of worship is to reflect on the creation of the universe to acquire a knowledge of its Creator. This is called "The Valley of Knowledge and Knowing God" (or *'Uqbah-tu al-'Ilm wa al-Ma'rifah*).

After having learnt these injunctions and obligations, he turns to obedience and service. In the meantime, he remembers the countless sins and excesses he has committed in his life and is urged first to repent from all his sins and purify before establishing relationship with God. At this stage, he faces another valley called "The Valley of

Repentance" (or '*Uqbah-tu at-Tawbah*). He will, therefore, engage himself in worship and devotion after crossing this "Valley of Repentance". At the same time, he will confront another valley called "The Valley of Obstacles" (or '*Uqbah-tul 'Awa-iq*). This is the valley of negative forces that will deter him from obedience and devotion. Now he finds that he cannot do full justice to worship and devotions owing to obstacles which are four in number:

- (1) The world;
- (2) The creations;
- (3) The [lower] self ("*Nafs*"); and
- (4) Satan.

The servant of God faces these obstacles in his path. He gives up or becomes indifferent to worship, sometimes on account of the worldly charms, the creations, the self or the seductions of Satan. It is, therefore necessary to get rid of these obstacles by renouncing the world, going into seclusion from the creations and resisting the self and Satan with force and firm resolutions.

Man's 'self' ("*Nafs*") is the strongest of all these obstacles. It is easy to get rid of other obstacles but this self is most tenacious, as it is the weapon of human life and it always accompanies man till death. It is also very difficult rather impossible, to eradicate it. It can, however, be kept under control with the bridle of *Taqwa* (pious awe, reverence and fear of God and righteousness), so that it may be subdued to obedience and prevented from rebellion. Thus, it is also a permanent valley and God's assistance is needed to cross it.

After having crossed this valley with God's help, man will face certain obstacles which will not let him devote himself to worship with full attention and submission. These are four in number:

1. Sustenance: Man's self ("*Nafs*") tries to keep him away from worship by frightening him from poverty. By being engaged in devotion and dissociating himself from the world (i.e., heart's attachment to the world), he cannot earn his livelihood enough to support his dependents.
2. Fear and misgivings: Man remains in doubts and suspicions about the suitability or unsuitability of a project and job he wants to undertake. He fears failures.
3. Calamities and hardships: Man thinks that by taking the path of God, he shall have to face calamities and hardships along with opposition and displeasure from the people. He shall have to bear various troubles and difficulties.
4. Divine Decree: This divine decree or fate sometimes favors and sometimes goes against man and is often full of bitterness.

Sometimes, man is confronted with these obstacles called "The Valley of Hindrances" (or '*Uqbah-tul 'Awaridh*'). In order to cross them successfully he stands in need of four things:

1. To have full trust in God in the matter of sustenance.
2. To entrust everything to God in the matter of fears and misgivings.
3. To bear with patience the calamities and hardships that befall one.
4. To submit passively to the Will of God in the matter of Divine Decree.

When a man has inculcated all these attributes in him and has, with the help of God, crossed this valley, he will face another valley. He shall feel that his self is not inclined to indulge in worship and has fallen a victim to extraordinary negligence in this matter; it has become averse to righteousness and is interested in sins and vices. Now in such a situation, an impetus is needed to create an interest in self ("*Nafs*") to turn to worship and obedience and to keep away from sins and vices and create in it a fear of God. This impetus lies in two acts:

1. Hope [in God], and
2. Fear [of God].

In other words, man should hope for reward and recompense which God has promised as a reward for piety, righteousness, and good deeds. This act of hoping will urge the self to worship, obedience, and good deeds. Similarly, a man should think of the grievous punishment and of the tortures and hardships which he is likely to face in the Hereafter. When this fear is born in the heart, man will give up disobedience and sins. This valley is called "The Valley of Urge and Impetus" (or '*Uqbah-tul Bawa'ith*'). When this valley stands in the way, man should cross it, keeping in view the foregoing directions.

After having crossed all these valleys, there will be nothing to stop him from devoting himself to the worship [of God] and good deeds with full concentration of mind and due submission. At this stage, he shall feel the presence of such attributes as shall induce him to indulge in worship and obedience with full concentration.

After engaging himself in worship, man shall feel that two major calamities are still spoiling his worship. One of these calamities is show or ostentation and the other is pride ('*Ujub* or self-righteousness). The love to show off his worship defeats the very purpose of his worship and destroys it altogether. Sometimes pride is born in his heart because of his righteous deeds and he begins to feel that he has become a very devout and saintly person and then he falls a victim to self-deception [and self-righteousness] then the entire acts of righteousness go to waste. In this way, now another valley stands in his way which is called "The Valley of Factors Ruining Worship" (or '*Uqbah-tul Qawadeh*'). To cross this valley safely, he stands in need of two other attributes: (1)

Sincerity and (2) God's Grace and Mercy. With the help of these attributes he should adorn his worship with sincerity and faithfulness of Exalted God and should believe that all his attributes and good qualities are due only to God's help and mercy. [A poet has said in Persian:]

"The good luck in him is not due to his own power and efforts but is it due to the help and favor of Merciful God".

In the absence of such feeling, there is every likelihood that good deeds are being ruined and these words may, God forbid, become applicable to him: "*Khasir ad-dunya wa al-akhirah*" (he lost the world as well as the Hereafter). He should cross this valley with God's help. After having crossed all these valleys, man attains the goal of worship and freedom from all calamities.

Now he realizes that he is permanently drowned in the bounties and mercy of Exalted God. It is due only to God's infinite mercy that he is enjoying the virtue of worship, good deeds and total freedom from sins and vices. It will mean a grievous loss if he becomes neglectful of this bounteous Master, God. In that case, he shall lose his status as a *Wali* (friend) and as a favored servant of God. He may be deprived of His blessings and his good deeds. He, therefore, praises God and pays thanks to Him. We call this "The Valley of Praise and Thanksgiving [to God]" (*'Uqbah-tul Hamd wa as-Shukr*).

When a man crosses this valley, also with the help of God, he realizes that he is about to reach his destination and attain his objective. After advancing further on this path, he shall arrive in the land of God's Mercy and Grace and the plain of Divine love and access to God. He shall be admitted into the place of the pleasure of God, and into the abode of the Angels. He will be granted special status of nearness to God and admission to the grand assembly of those who always invoke and pray to Exalted God. He will become entitled to the gifts and bounties of the Creator. He will become so deeply absorbed in the company of the spiritual Angels that he shall pass the remaining part of his life in the garden of God's remembrance. Bodily, he will be in this world but spiritually and virtually his heart will remain attached to the affairs of the Hereafter. His love for and interest in the affairs of the world will vanish gradually. Every moment he will be waiting for the call of death with a desire to meet God. The call will ultimately come to him accompanied with glad tidings. He will be transferred from this transitory world to the eternal world of the Hereafter, where he will be ushered into Paradise with great honor, ease, comfort, luxuries, and love. Divine reception and entertainment will be too rich and sumptuous to be described in words. This unique status and these blessings and bounties will be on the increase day by day. Even the Angels will envy him on his success and elevation to high ranks [before God].

We pray to Exalted God to include us all, by His Mercy, among such servants and favor us with His great gifts and bounties and exclude us from His rejected and condemned servants. May He help us all to put our knowledge into practice, to pass our lives according to His Will and pleasure, and let not our knowledge be a curse upon us. This is all very easy for Him as He is the most Merciful of all who show mercy.

And this is not at all difficult for God.

The following is the order and setup to which I have referred to in the beginning. The gist of this order and setup is that seven valleys stand in the path of worship and devotion [to God and crossing these valleys lead to the Gnosis of God which is the purpose of one's life, that in turn, leads to eternal happiness and endless triumph]:

1. The valley of knowledge and getting to know God,
2. The valley of repentance,
3. The valley of obstacles,
4. The valley of hindrances,
5. The valley of urge and impetus,
6. The valley of factors ruining worship, and
7. The valley of praise and gratitude [to God].

A discussion of all these valleys will complete my book "*Minhaj al-'Abideen [Ila Jannatu Rabb al-'Aalameen]*" (or "Best Path for the Worshippers [of God Leading them to the Paradise of the Lord of all the Universes and Existences]"). I shall state briefly the relevant meanings and important points and shall also give some details thereon in separate chapters, for this, I seek God's help and "*La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*" (there is no Power and Might other than God).

Further Exposition of the Purpose of Life

Imam Ghazali further elaborates on the purpose of human life in the beginning of his famous book "*Jawahir al-Qur'an*" or "Jewels of the Qur'an" and says that Qur'an has six objectives with a total of ten objectives when some of the sub-objectives are included in this. The first and the most important objective of Qur'an, that supersedes all other objectives, with them being the ones serving the main objective, is to know God, i.e., to attain the state of Gnosis of God (*Ma'rifa*). All other objectives of Qur'an are subservient to this main objective and are in the service of attaining this main objective. Imam Ghazali says the following in the beginning of this marvelous book "*Jawahir al-Qur'an*" or "Jewels of the Qur'an" [9]:

THE QUR'AN IS LIKE AN OCEAN WHICH COVERS VARIOUS TYPES OF JEWELS AND VALUABLES

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْءَانَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

"Do they not ponder over the Qur'an [in order to understand its deep meanings], or is it that their minds (i.e., hearts) are locked up from within?" (Qur'an, Chapter 47, Verse 24)

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful

After mentioning the name of God, I glorify Him with His praise which should constitute the beginning of every book. May His blessings be upon His messengers! — A prayer which should form the completion of every discourse.

I then wish to rouse you from your sleep. O you, who recite the Qur'an to a great length, who take its study as an occupation, and who imbibe some of its outward meanings and sentences. How long will you ramble on the shore of the ocean, closing your eyes to the wonders of the meanings of the Qur'an? Was it not your duty to sail to the midst of the fathomless ocean of these meanings in order to see their wonders, to travel to their islands in order to gather their best produce, and to dive into their depths so that you might become rich by obtaining their jewels? Do you not feel ashamed of being deprived of their pearls and jewels by your persistence in looking at their shores and outward appearances?

Has it not come to your knowledge that the Qur'an is like an ocean and that it is from the Qur'an that the sciences of the ancients and the moderns branch off, just as rivers and brooks branch off from the shores of an ocean? Why do you not emulate those people who waded through their waves and thus gained red brimstone, dived into their depths and thus drew out red corundum, shining pearls and green chrysolite, travelled along their shores and thus gathered grey ambergris and fresh blooming aloe-wood, and became attached to their islands and thus derived from their animals the greatest antidote and the strongest musk? Take notice that, fulfilling the duty of Islamic brotherhood and hoping the blessing of your prayer to God, I now wish to guide you to the manner of the journey of these people, of their diving and of their swimming [into the fathomless ocean of the deep meanings of Qur'an].

THE AIMS OF THE QUR'AN AND ITS VALUABLES ARE OF SIX KINDS

The secret of the Qur'an, its purest pith, and its ultimate aim consist in calling people to God, the Most Powerful, the Lord of this world and the Hereafter, the Creator of the heavens above and the layers of earth below, and of whatever is between them and whatever is under the moist subsoil. For this reason, the chapters of the Qur'an and its verses are limited to six types of which three are precedents and important principles and [the remaining] three follow them, enrich them and complete them. As to the three important divisions, they concern the definition of God to Whom men are called [in order to know God and attain the Gnosis or *Ma'rifah*], the definition of the straight path perseverance in which is required in advancing towards Him [i.e., the spiritual path that leads one to God], and the definition of the condition at the time of attaining to Him [in a state of Gnosis or *Ma'rifah*].

As to the three divisions which enrich them and complete them, one describes the conditions of those who answer the call to God, and His delicate dealings with them, the

secret and the purpose of this being to excite [in others] a desire [for the attainment of these conditions] and to encourage them [to it]. It also describes the conditions of those who shrink from answering the call and the manner of the punishment of them by God, the secret and the purpose of this being to provoke consideration and fear. The second division narrates the conditions of those who deny God, and reveals their disgrace and their ignorance in disputing and arguing against the truth. The secret and the purpose of all this being, on the side of falsity, to make manifest and to create aversion, and, on the side of truth, clear apprehension, confirmation and constraint. The third division defines the stages of the path to God and the manner of taking provision and preparation for it.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE SIX AIMS OF THE QUR'AN

The **first division** of Qur'anic verses concerns the definition of the One to Whom men are called. It is an explanation of knowledge (*Ma'rifa or Gnosis*) of God (may He be exalted!) and it is the red brimstone. This knowledge comprises knowledge of the essence of the True One, knowledge of His attributes, and knowledge of His works, and these three are to be called corundum, since these are the most special of the benefits derived from the red brimstone.

Just as corundums have grades — among them are red, bluish-grey and yellow; some of them are more precious than others — so these three forms of knowledge are not of the same grade. On the contrary, the most precious of them is knowledge of God's Essence ("*Dhaat*"), and hence this should be called the red corundum. Next to this is knowledge of God's attributes ("*Sifaat*"), and this is the bluish-grey corundum. Contiguous to this is knowledge of God's works ("*Afaal*"), and this is the yellow corundum.

As the most precious of these corundums is the greatest and the rarest to find, and because of its rarity [even] kings can only get possession of a little of it, whereas they may sometimes gain much of what is inferior to it, so also knowledge of Divine Essence is the narrowest in scope, most difficult to acquire, most puzzling to thought, and furthest from receiving discussion. This is the reason why Qur'an contains only notes and indications of this knowledge, and references to it amount to the mention of absolute sanctification such as the words of God (may He be exalted!), "Like Him there is nothing" (Qur'an), and the *Surah* (chapter) of Sincerity ("*Ikhlas*") and the mention of absolute greatness such as His words, "Glory be to Him! He is High and exalted above that which they [i.e., polytheists] describe of Him! The Originator of the heavens and the earth!" (Qur'an).

As to the divine attributes ("*Sifaat*") their scope is wider, and the girdle of speech concerning them is broader. This is the reason why the verses describing divine knowledge, power, life, speech, wisdom, hearing, seeing, and so on, are numerous. As

for divine works they are comparable to a sea, the shores of which are very broad and the bounds of which cannot be ascertained by inquiry. Rather there is nothing in existence except God and His works. All that exists besides Him is His works; the Qur'an, however, includes the obvious of them existing in the visible world such as the mention of the heavens, the stars, the earth, mountains, trees, animals, seas, plants, sending down of sweet water [from the clouds] and all other means of maintaining plants and [other forms of] life. These are the divine works obvious to the senses. The noblest of His works, the most wonderful of them, and those which point most clearly to the glory of their Maker are those which are not obvious to the senses, but belong to the invisible world ("*Alam al-Malakoot*"). They are the angels, the incorporeal beings, the spirit, and the soul, i.e., that part of man which knows God (may He be exalted!); these last two are also among the sum total of the unseen and invisible world and are outside the world of possession and sense perception.

Among the divine works not obvious to the senses are the terrestrial angels entrusted with [the care of] mankind, and they are those angels who prostrated themselves before Adam (May peace and blessings of God be upon him!). Among them are also the devils who have been given power over mankind, and they are those who refused to prostrate themselves before Adam. [Further,] among them are the celestial angels the highest of whom in rank are the archangels ("*al-karbiyyun*") who are secluded in Paradise giving no attention to human beings; rather they give no attention to anything other than God (may He be exalted!) because of their absorption in the beauty of His Lordly Excellency and its glory; they confine their gaze to Him, glorifying Him day and night without tiring. Do not consider it improbable that among the servants of God there may be someone whom His glory diverts from giving attention to Adam and his children (i.e., humanity). Man cannot magnify himself to this extent. Truly, the Messenger of God (may He bless him and greet him!) said, "Surely God has a white earth where the journey of the sun is of thirty days similar to the days of this world; it is filled thirty times more [than this world] with creatures who do not know that God is disobeyed in the earth, nor do they know that God (may He be exalted!) has created Adam and *Iblis* (Satan). Ibn 'Abbas (may God be pleased with him) narrated this tradition. The kingdom of God is indeed wide! Know that the majority of people are not aware of most of the works of God, especially the noblest of these works. Rather their understanding is confined to the worlds of sense and imagination, which form the last of the results of the invisible world and are like the rind most distant from the purest pith. One who has not gone beyond this stage has, as it were, seen nothing of the pomegranate except its rind, or of man's wonders except his outward shape. These, then, constitute the sum total of the first division of Qur'anic *suras* (Chapters) and verses, and in them are present different types of corundums. We shall soon recite to you the verses revealed concerning them especially, since they are the essence of the Qur'an, its heart, its pith, and its secret.

The **second division** concerns the definition of the path of advancing towards God (may He be exalted!). This is by devoting oneself to the service of God as He (may He be exalted!) said, "Devote yourself to Him very devoutly" (Qur'an, Chapter 73, Verse 8). Devotion to Him is achieved by advancing towards Him [with one's heart and soul] and

turning away from things other than Him; and this is expressed in His words, "There is no God but He; so take Him for a guardian" (Qur'an, Chapter 73, Verse 9).

Advancement towards Him can only be achieved by perseverance in remembrance of Him, while turning away from things other than Him, which is affected by opposing passion, by cleansing oneself from the troubles of this world, and by purification of the soul from them [i.e., all vices, evils, and negative propensities and inclinations]. The result of this purification is prosperity in the Hereafter, as God (may He be exalted!) said, "He indeed has achieved prosperity who has purified himself and remembers the name of his Lord and so performs the ritual prayer" (Qur'an). Thus the [spiritual] path [leading to God] is supported by two matters, namely, perseverance and opposition — perseverance in remembrance of God (may He be exalted!) and opposition to that which diverts from Him. This is the journey (*as-safar*) to God. In this journey to God, there is movement neither from the side of the traveler nor from the side of Him to Whom he travels, since both are together. Have you not heard the words of God (may He be exalted!) — and He is the most truthful of all those who speak:

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

"We are nearer to him [i.e., man] than his jugular vein" (Qur'an, Chapter 50, Verse 16).

The truth is that the seeker and the Sought are comparable to a picture present in a mirror: The picture is not revealed in it because of rust on its surface; when, however, you polish the mirror the picture is revealed in it, neither by the movement of the picture towards it nor by its movement towards the picture, but by the removal of the veil. God (may He be exalted!) is revealed by His essence and is not concealed, for concealment of light is impossible, and by light everything which is concealed becomes obvious, and God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The concealment of light from the pupil of the eye is only caused by one of two matters — either by turbidness in the pupil of the eye, or by weakness in it since it is unable to tolerate the great dazzling light just as the eyes of bats are unable to tolerate the light of the sun. Nothing, then, is incumbent upon you except to cleanse turbidness from the eye of the soul and to strengthen its pupil. In that case, God will be in the soul as the picture is in the mirror, so that when He suddenly reveals Himself in the mirror of the soul, you hasten to say that He is inside the soul and that the human nature (*nasoot*) has put on the divine nature (*lahoot*), until God strengthens you with the firm word so that you realize that the picture is not [in reality] inside the mirror, but [only] reflected in it. If the picture were to rest inside the mirror it would be inconceivable that it could be reflected in many mirrors at one time; rather [the case would be that] at that time when it rested inside one mirror, it moved from another. Such, however, is not the fact in the least, for God reveals Himself to many of the Gnostics at the same time. It is true that He reveals Himself to some mirrors [of the souls] most perfectly, most obviously, most directly and most clearly, and to others most secretly and indirectly, and this [difference] is commensurate with the clarity of the mirror [of the heart], its polish, correctness of its shape and the right width of its surface. This is why the Prophet [Muhammad] (may God bless him and greet him!) said, "God certainly reveals Himself to people generally, but to Abu Bakr [a great Prophetic companion and saint] especially".

Knowledge of [spiritual] advancement [towards God] and attainment of Him (*wusul*) is also [like] a deep sea from the seas of the Qur'an. We shall soon gather for you the verses [of Qur'an] which will guide you to the path of [spiritual] advancement [towards God] so that you may reflect over them in their entirety. It may be that what should be opened will be opened to you. This division [of Qur'anic chapters and verses] constitutes the shining pearls.

The **third division** [of Qur'anic verses] defines man's condition at the time of attaining to God [in a state of nearness and Gnosis or *Ma'rifa*]. It includes the mention of repose and delight which he will encounter. The word which is comprehensive of all the types of repose is Paradise, and the highest of these is the pleasure of looking upon God (may He be exalted!). It [also] includes the mention of humiliation and punishment to be suffered by those who are veiled from Him through neglecting to traverse [the path to Him]. The word which is comprehensive of all the types of pain is Hell, and the most intense of them is the pain caused by the veil (*Hijab*) [from God] and removal to a distance [from Him] (may God protect us from it!). For this reason, He mentioned it first in His words (may He be exalted!):

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُوبُونَ

"No indeed. On that Day they will most certainly be veiled from their Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 83, Verse 15).

This division further includes the mention of the preceding conditions of both groups, [i.e., the people of Paradise and the people of Hell]. These conditions are expressed as resurrection, raising of the dead, reckoning, the balance [for weighing both the good and evil deeds of people], and the bridge [over hell that everyone will cross to enter Paradise]. These have obvious outward meanings, which occupy the place of food, for common men; these [also] have obscure secrets, which occupy the place of life, for the special people (i.e., Gnostics or friends and intimates of God). A third part of the verses of the Qur'an and its chapters concerns the details of these. We do not intend to gather them [in this book], because they are more than can be gathered and counted. In their case, there is scope for thought and search. This third division constitutes the green chrysolite.

The **fourth division** [of Qur'anic chapters and verses] concerns the conditions of those who have traversed [the path to God] and those who have denied Him and deviated from His path. The conditions of the former are [expressed in the] stories of Adam, Noah (Nuh), Abraham (Ibrahim), Moses (Musa), Aaron (Harun), Zachariah, John (Yahya), Jesus ('Isa), Mary (Maryam), David (Dawud), Solomon (Sulayman), Jonah (Yunus), Lot (Lut), Enoch (Idris), Khidr, Shu'ayb, Elias and Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of God be upon them all), Gabriel, Michael, [other] angels, and so on. The conditions of those who have denied God and have deviated from His path are like

the stories of Nimrod, Pharaoh, 'Aad, people of Lot, people of *Tubba*', men of the Grove (*Ayka*), unbelievers of Mecca, worshippers of creations of man, the devils, and so on. The benefit of this division lies in the arousal of fear, the giving of warning and the promotion of consideration. This division also includes secrets, indications and hints, which require prolonged reflection. Grey ambergris and fresh blooming aloe-wood are to be found in the description of the conditions of these two groups of people. The verses revealed concerning them are so many that there is no need to seek them and gather them.

The **fifth division** [of Qur'anic chapters and verses] concerns the arguments of the unbelievers against the truth, clear explanation of their humiliation by obvious proofs, and the striking disclosure of their falsehood and self-deceit. Their falsehood is of three kinds: One consists in speaking of God (may He be exalted!) in terms which do not befit Him, such as that the angels are His daughters, that He has progeny, that He has partners, etc. The second is to consider God's Messenger Muhammad (may God bless him and greet him!) as a sorcerer, soothsayer and a liar, to refuse to believe in his prophethood, and to say that he is a man like other people so that he does not deserve to be followed. The third is the denial of the Last Day, the denial of the resurrection, raising the dead, Paradise, Hell, and the denial of the consequences of obedience and disobedience to God. In His (may He be exalted!) arguments substantiated with proofs against the unbelievers are present subtleties and realities in which a great antidote is to be found. The verses concerning this [fifth] division also are obviously numerous.

The **sixth division** [of Qur'anic chapters and verses] defines the fulfilment of obligations at the stages of the path [to God] and the manner of taking provision and of seeking preparedness by making ready the weapons which will repel the bandits and brigands at the stages. The explanation of this is that the world is one of the stages of those who travel to God (may He be exalted!), and the body is a vehicle. The man who neglects the management of the stage and the vehicle cannot complete his journey. So long as he does not set in order the affairs of his livelihood, the task of complete devotion to God (may He be exalted!) which is identical with traversing the path to Him, cannot be attained. This devotion [in turn] cannot be complete until his body is sound and his offspring continued. These two become complete by the means of preservation of their existence and by the means of repelling those things which corrupt them and destroy them. As to the means of preservation of their existence, they are eating and drinking which are for the continuance of the body and for sexual intercourse which is for the continuance of offspring. Food is created as a means of life, and females as a means of continuation of species. But edibles and women are not special on the authority of their innate quality. Should this matter be left without defining the rules of making them special [for some only], people would have neglected it and fought among themselves, and this would have diverted them from traversing the path [to God]; indeed, this would have led them to destruction.

The Qur'an, therefore, has explained the rules of specialty in regard to wealth in the verses dealing with sales, usury, giving and receiving of loans, division of inheritances, the causes of required expenditures, the division of booty, charities, marriages, emancipation of slaves and the taking of prisoners in battle. Qur'an has [also] defined the manner of specialty in regard to wealth, at the time of accusation, by confession, oaths and witnesses. As for specialty with regard to females, it is described in the verses concerning marriage, divorce, withdrawal from divorce, the legal period of retirement assigned to a widow or divorced woman before she may marry again, *khula'* (a woman's right to get divorce), dowry (a compulsory amount payable to woman by her husband at marriage) and also in the verses concerning those women with whom marriage is unlawful because of blood relationship and relationship through marriage. The means of repelling those elements which corrupt both the soundness of the body and the continuance of offspring are the punishments which restrain man from those elements. These punishments are like war with the aggressors and struggle against unjust people, penalties, indemnities, reproofs, atonements, blood-ransoms [to families of murder victims] and retaliation [for wrongs committed against innocent people]. Justice and blood-ransom are prescribed as a deterrent from effort to destroy the life and limb [of another]. The penalties for theft and highway robbery are prescribed as a means of repelling that which destroys wealth, which is the means of livelihood. The penalties for adultery, false accusation are prescribed as deterrents from that which disorders the matters of offspring and lineages and corrupts the means of the continuance of the human species and successive generations. Struggle against aggressors is enjoined as repelling that which will be caused by the deniers of truth, namely, disorder of the means of livelihood and worship, by both of which the [task of] attaining to God is accomplished. Struggle with unjust people is ordered to repel the confusion which will appear when the disobedient people slip from the control of the government which is entrusted to the one [i.e., the leader] who guards those who traverse [the path of God] and support the righteous, as a deputy of the Messenger of the Lord of all the worlds. The verses revealed concerning these matters are not hidden from you. They embody fundamental principles, advantages, wisdom, and benefits, which all are comprehended by the one who reflects upon the beauties of the revealed [Divine] law which describes the bounds of judgements concerning the matters of this life. This sixth division [of the Qur'anic verses also] include that which is termed lawful, unlawful, and the bounds of God. It is in the verses falling under this division that the strongest musk is to be found.

These [six divisions or categorizations of all verses of Qur'an] then form the confluence of those teachings which are contained in the chapters of the Qur'an and their verses. Should you thread these six divisions together with their intended branches on one string, you will find that there are ten types [of verses of Qur'an]. [They concern] the Divine Essence [or Being of God/*Dhaat*], Divine attributes [*Sifaat*], Divine works (*Af'aa*l), the life to come [after this worldly life ends with death], the straight path (i.e., the spiritual path leading one to God and Gnosis or *Ma'rifa*), purification and beautification [of the soul, i.e., *tazkiyah* or teachings related to spirituality guiding one to the Gnosis of God], the conditions of the saints (who attained Gnosis and spiritual perfection), the conditions of those who rejected God, [His] arguments with the unbelievers [to help

them see the light of truth], and [finally] the bounds of legal judgements [to preserve life, property, peace and prosperity for the benefit of human societies].

Polished Mirror of the Heart and the Light of Truth Reflecting in it

Ghazali further elaborates on the reality of the soul and how it's able to reach the state of Gnosis (*"Ma'rifa"*) of God, which is the purpose of human life and on which the attainment of eternal happiness and endless success depends, in the third volume (also known as the "Quarter of Destructives of the Soul") of his most famous book *"Ihya 'Uloom ad-Deen"* or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" (4 volumes) as follows ^[10]:

It should be known that the seat of knowledge is the heart, by which I mean the subtle tenuous substance which rules all the parts of the body and is obeyed and served by all its members. In its relationship with the real nature of the intelligible, it is like a mirror in its relationship to the forms of changing appearances. For even as that which changes, has a form, and the image of that form is reflected in the mirror and represented therein, so also every intelligible has its specific nature, and this nature has a form which is reflected and made manifest in the mirror of the heart. Even as the mirror is one thing, the forms of individuals another, and the representation of their image in the mirror a third. Thus, three things in all, so here too there are three things: the heart, the specific nature of things and the representation and presence of these in the heart. The intellect stands for the heart in which there exists the image of the specific nature of things. The intelligible stands for the specific nature of things. Comprehension stands for the representation of the image in the mirror.

As well as the act of grasping, for example, requires that which grasps, such as the hand, that which is grasped, such as the sword, and an act of bringing together the sword and the hand by placing the sword in the hand which is called the act of grasping, so also the presence of the image of the intelligible into the heart is called comprehension. The reality was in existence and so also was in the heart but there was no comprehension present, for comprehension stands for the presence of reality in the heart. Similarly, the sword was in existence and so also was the hand, but there was nothing named 'the act of grasping and taking hold' because the sword has not actually come into the hand. It is true that grasping stands for the presence of the sword itself in the hand, while the intelligible itself does not come into the heart. For fire itself does not come into the heart of one who knows fire, but that which is actually present in its definition and real nature which corresponds to its form. So, the comparison of the heart with the mirror is more fitting, for man himself is not really present in the mirror, but there is present merely an image which corresponds to him, and thus, the presence of an image in the heart corresponding to the real nature of the intelligible is called comprehension.

The mirror may not reflect the forms for five reasons: first, because of a defect in its formation, as for example, a piece of crude iron before it is turned and shaped and polished; second, because of dirt on its surface and rust and dullness, even though it is

perfect in formation; third, because it is turned away from the direction of the object towards something else, as for example, if the object were behind the mirror; fourth, because of a veil placed between the mirror and the object; and fifth, because of ignorance of the direction of the object desired, so that it is impossible to place it in front of the position and direction of the object.

Likewise, the heart is a mirror ready to have reflected in it the true nature of reality of all things. Hearts are short of knowledge, which they lack only because of the following five reasons:

The first reason is an imperfection in its own nature, such as the heart of a child which does not reflect intelligible things because of its imperfection.

The second reason is because of the dullness due to acts of disobedience, and the filth heaped up upon the face of the heart because of many lusts, for these prevent the purity and cleanness of heart. Reality ceases to manifest therein in proportion to its darkness and the filth heaped up upon it. To this, the Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) referred in his statement, "When a man commits a sin, something of his mind forsakes him and does not return to him again." That is to say, there comes over his heart a dullness whose influence abides forever, even when his purpose is to remove it with a good deed. But if he had done the good deed without the preceding evil deed, then the heart will unquestionably shine more. However, when the evil deed preceded, the value of the good deed was lost, although the heart was restored by it to its state previous to the evil deed but its light was not increased thereby. This is an evident loss and an inescapable defect. The mirror which has been stained and then wiped off with a polishing cloth, is not like that which has been wiped with the polisher to increase its cleanness without any previous stain. So undertaking obedience to God and opposing the demands of the appetites, brighten the heart and purify it. Therefore, God Almighty says:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

"Those who strive in Our Ways, We will surely and definitely guide them in Our Paths."
(Qur'an, Chapter 29, Verse 69)

The Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "God causes him who acts upon the best he knows to become the heir of knowledge that he knows not." (This narration is reported in collection of Prophetic traditions called "Abu Na'im" on the authority of Anas).

The third reason is that the heart may be turned away from the direction of reality which is sought. The heart of the righteous and obedient servant of God, although being bright, might not have the clear statement of reality, for he does not seek reality, nor does he have his mirror [of the heart] opposite to the direction of the thing sought. Perhaps, all of his attention is taken up by the depths of bodily submission or arranging the means of his livelihood and his thought is not free to contemplate the Divine

Presence and the hidden Divine realities. So there is revealed to him only that which he thinks about, whether it is the minute defects of his religious works or the hidden faults of the soul if it is these which occupy his mind, or the interests of gaining a livelihood if he thinks of them. If limiting one's attention to works and details of acts of obedience, prevents the revelation of reality with clarity, what is your estimation of one who spends his energy in the lusts and pleasures of this present world and the things connected therewith? How should true revelation not be veiled from such a person?

The fourth reason is the veil. The obedient man who has overcome his appetites and devoted himself exclusively to a certain specific reality may not have this revealed to him because it is veiled from him by some belief which he had from his early childhood, and he has blindly followed and accepted it in good faith. This belief walls him off from the true nature of reality and prevents anything being revealed to his heart in opposition to the strict interpretations of the doctrines which he has blindly accepted. This too is a great veil that overshadows most Muslim scholastic theologians and those who are ardent followers of juristic schools, if not most righteous men who contemplate on the dominion of the heavens and the earth; for they are veiled by their blindly following of dogmas which are hardened in their souls and firmly fixed in their hearts, and have become a veil between them and the perception of realities.

The fifth reason is the ignorance of the direction from which the knowledge of the thing sought must be obtained. For the novice cannot obtain knowledge of that which is unknown except by recalling the sciences which are related to what he desires. Once he recalls them and arranges them within himself in a special order to which the learned name 'process of deduction', he will then have found the direction of the thing sought and its true nature will be clearly revealed to his heart. For the things that are not instinctive that one desires to know, cannot be caught except in the net of the acquired knowledge; indeed, no item of knowledge is acquired except from two preceding items of knowledge which are related and combined in a special way, and from their combination a third item of knowledge is gained.... Every item of knowledge has two special sources and a particular way of their combination and from this combination there is gained the derived item of knowledge which is sought. Ignorance of these sources and of the manner of combining them is what hinders understanding. As an example of this, already mentioned is the ignorance of the direction in which the object is.

Another example is that of a man who desire to see his face in mirror. If he holds up the mirror in front of his face, he does not have it placed opposite to the position of his face, which thus does not appear in it. If he holds it behind his face and facing it, he has turned the mirror away from his eyes and so cannot see either the mirror or the reflection of the face in it. So, he needs another mirror to place behind his face, with the first mirror facing it in such a way that he can see it and he must observe the proper relationship between the placing of the two mirrors so that the image of his face is reflected in the mirror opposite to it, and the image of this mirror is reflected in the other mirror that faces the eye. Then the eyes perceives the image of his face. So, in the pursuit of knowledge, there are strange ways in which there are devious turnings and

oblique ways, stranger than those we have mentioned concerning the mirror, and rare indeed upon the face of the earth is he who is guided to the way of clearly seeing through those obvious ways.

These are the reasons that prevent the heart from coming to know the real nature of things. Otherwise, every heart is constitutionally able to come to know the realities, for it is a lordly and noble thing, distinctive from other substances in the world by this special property and noble quality, to which it is referred to by the statement of God Almighty:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا
الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

“Verily We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains and they refused to bear it and feared it, but man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.” (Qur’an, Chapter 33, Verse 72)

This refers to the special characteristic that distinguishes man from the heavens, the earth and the mountains, by which he is enabled to bear the trust of God. This trust is the experiential (spiritual) knowledge and monotheism.

The heart of every human being is, in its original constitution, fitted for and capable of bearing this trust, but the reasons which we have mentioned, prevent it from carrying this burden and realization of this trust. In this connection, the Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of God be upon him) said: “Every child is born on ‘Fitra’ (true innate nature of man that is in total conformity with the Divine Reality and universal truths), and it is only his parents that make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.” (This narration is reported by collection of prophetic narrations *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah). The Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of God be upon him) further said: “Had it not been for the fact that devils hover over the hearts of the children of Adam (i.e., human beings), they would have been able to see the dominion of Heaven.” This is a reference to many of these hindrances which are the veil between the heart and the dominion.

To this also is the reference in the narration on the authority of Ibn Umar (May God be pleased with him) in which he said: “The Messenger of God (peace and blessing of God be upon him) was asked: ‘O Messenger of God! Where is God? On earth or in the heaven?’ He replied: ‘In the hearts of His believing creatures.’” According to a particular narration, God said: “Neither My earth nor My heaven could contain Me, but the tender and calm heart of my servant.” It is further narrated that the Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of God be upon him) was asked: “Who are the best of men?” He replied: “Every believer whose heart is cleansed [and purified of all inner filth].” They asked: “What is the cleansed heart?” He answered: “It is the God-fearing pure heart in which there is no fraud, nor inequity, nor treachery, nor rancor, nor envy [thus the heart is pure and devoid of all evils].”

In this context, Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (may God be pleased with him) said: “My heart saw my Lord when, because of piety, He removed the veil.” For if the veil is lifted between oneself and his heart, the visible material world and the dominion of invisible unseen become clearly manifest in his heart, and he sees a Garden, the breadth of a part of which is that of heavens and the earth. Its total expanse is greater than the heavens and the earth, for the heavens and the earth stand for the visible material world, which although, broad in extent and far-reaching in compass, is yet but finite in relation to the whole. But the dominion of the invisible unseen is boundless, consisting of those mysteries that are beyond the sight of the eyes and perceived only by insight. It is true that only a part of it appears to the eyes and perceived only by insight. It is true that only a part of it appears to the heart, but in itself and in its relation to the knowledge of God, it is infinite.

The material world and the unseen dominion taken together under one classification, are called the Lordly Presence, for the Lordly Presence encompasses all existing things. For there exists nothing except God, His Acts and [His] Dominion; and His servants are a part of His Acts. What appears of this to the heart is, according to some, the Garden itself; but according to the people of truth, it is the means of meriting the Garden and the extent of his possession in the Garden is in proportion to the extent of his knowledge, and the extent to which God and His Attributes and His Actions have been revealed to him. The intent of all of these acts of worship and actions of organs is the purification, improvement, illumination and enlightenment of the heart. God says in Qur’an:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّهَا ۝٩

“Prosperous [successful and achiever of felicity] is the one who purifies it (i.e., the heart).” (Qur’an, Chapter 91, Verse 9)

The purpose of [inner] purification is to achieve the illumination of faith in it; I mean the shining light of knowledge of God (i.e., Gnosis or “*Ma’rifa*”). That is the point in the statement of God Almighty:

فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ

“Whomsoever God wishes to guide, He expands his heart to Islam (i.e., submission to the Will of God and purity and illumination of the soul that true light of faith and Gnosis of God brings into it).” (Qur’an, Chapter 6, Verse 125)

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ ۗ

“Could then, one whose heart God has opened wide with willingness towards self-surrender unto Him, so that he is illumined by a light [that flows] from his Sustainer (i.e., God), [be likened to the blind and deaf of the heart?]” (Qur’an, Chapter 39, Verse 22)

This illumination and faith [and certitude in God] has three degrees: The first degree is the faith of laymen which is purely blind imitation. The second degree is the faith of scholastic theologians that is mingled with logical reasoning. The third degree is the

faith of the Gnostics, which is seeing clearly with the light of certainty [and certitude of faith].

I will make this clear to you by an example: your admission that Zaid, for instance, is in the house has three degrees. The first is that someone has told you, someone whom you have experienced to be truthful and have never been known to lie and never doubted his word. Your heart, by the mere hearing, calmly receives his report and is satisfied with it. This is the belief by mere blind acceptance, and of such nature is the faith of the laymen. For when they reached the age of discrimination, they heard from their fathers and mothers of the existence of God, of His knowledge, will, power and the rest of His attributes; also of the sending of the Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him), his veracity and his message. They received even as they heard and became established therein and satisfied therewith, and it never occurred to their minds to disagree with what their fathers, mothers and teacher told them because of the high esteem in which they held them. This faith is the efficient cause of salvation in the hereafter, and those who embrace it are in the first (i.e., the lowest) ranks of the people of the right hand (i.e., people who will attain salvation) but not among those who are drawn near God. For this [level of] faith has in it, a mystical unveiling, nor insight, nor expansion of the heart by the light of certainty, since it is possible for errors to lie in what is heard from individuals, nay indeed from groups, in that which pertains to doctrine. The hearts of Jews and Christians are also satisfied with what they hear from their fathers. Muslims believe the truth, not because they have studied it, but because the word of truth has been passed on to them.

The second degree of belief is that you [yourself] hear the words and voice of Zaid from within the house, but from behind a wall and you deduce from this the fact of his presence in the house. Then your belief, your admittance and your certainty that he is in the house are stronger than your belief through hearsay alone. For if you are told that he is in the house and then if you hear his voice, you become more certain of it, for the voice indicates shape and form to him who hears it on condition of seeing the form. So, his heart judges this to be the voice of that person. This is belief mingled with proof. It is also possible for error to follow because one voice might resemble another. Also, pretense is possible by means of imitating the voice. This does not occur to the mind of the hearer, for he had no thought of any such accusation, or that anyone had a purpose in such dissembling and imitation.

The third degree of belief is to enter the house and look at him and see him with your own eyes. This is the real experiential knowledge and sure observation. It is like the knowledge of those who are drawn near God and of the sincere lovers of truth, for their belief is based on witnessing. This belief includes that of laymen and that of scholastic theologians and they have this very evident additional advantage that leaves no place for the possibility of error. It is true that believers of this class differ in rank according to their attainments in knowledge, and the degrees of unveiling.

An example of the difference in degrees of knowledge is that one man sees Zaid in the house when he is near at hand in the courtyard and while the sun is rising and so he sees him perfectly, while another sees him in the room or at a distance or in the evening so that his form is sufficiently plain that he can be sure that it is he, but the minute details and hidden features of his form are not made clear to him. The variance in degrees of seeing divinely revealed truths is of this kind. Regarding the difference in the attainment of knowledge, it is as though one sees Zaid, Amr, Bakr and others in the house while another sees Zaid only. The knowledge of the former is unquestionably greater than that of the latter because of the abundance of things known.

This is the state of the heart in relation to the sciences and God knows best that which is right.

.....

Wonders and Mysteries of the Heart

It should be known that the wonders of the heart are beyond the realm of what senses are able to perceive, for the heart is also beyond sense perception. The understandings are too weak to grasp, except by means of a tangible example, to put to sense that which is not perceived through the senses. So we shall explain this to people of weak understanding by means of two examples.

For the first illustration, let us suppose that a reservoir is dug in the earth, into which the water can be accumulated from the surface above through streams that flow into it. The bed of the reservoir may also be dug up and the dirt removed from it until the fountain of pure water is reached, and then the water bursts forth from it until the fountain of pure water is reached, and then the water bursts forth from the bottom of the reservoir. The water is purer and more constant and perhaps more copious and abundant. The heart then is like the reservoir and knowledge like the water. The five external senses are like the streams. Knowledge may possibly be conducted to the heart by means of the streams of the [five] senses and the consideration of things observed until it is filled with knowledge. It is also possible to stop up these streams from it by solitude and retirement and averting the eyes from seeing and then to resolve in the depth of the heart upon purifying it and taking away from it the layers of coverings until the fountain of knowledge bursts forth from within it. But you might say: "How can knowledge burst forth from the heart itself while it is destitute of it?" Know that this is one of the wonders of the heart's mysteries. It is not permissible to deal with it in the science of practical religion [as it belongs to esoteric knowledge].

What can be mentioned is that the real nature of things are written down in the Preserved Tablet ("*Loh Mahfooz*"), and indeed in the hearts of the angels who are brought near [to the Divine Reality]. For just as an architect draws plans for building on blank paper and then brings them into actuality in accordance with the design or archetype. Thus, the Creator of the heavens and the earth wrote an archetype of the world from the beginning to the end upon the Preserved Tablet and then brought it into actuality in accordance with the archetype. From the world which has been brought into

actuality in the image of the archetype, there is transmitted to the external senses and retentive imagination still another image. For whoever looks at the sky and the earth and then closes his eyes, sees in his imagination the image of the sky and the earth so that it is as though he was looking at them; and were the sky and the earth get annihilated and he himself survived, he would find within himself the image of the sky and the earth as though he was beholding them and looking at them. Then from his imagination, an effect is transmitted to the heart, so that there is represented in it, the real nature of things which has entered into sensation and imagination.

The representation in the heart corresponds to the world which is represented in the imagination, which in its turn corresponds to the world as it exists in itself, external to the imagination and heart of man. This existing world corresponds to the archetype existing in the Preserved Tablet. Thus, the world has four degrees of existence. There is existence in the Preserved Tablet which is prior to its corporeal existence. Sequel to it is its real existence, which is followed in turn by its imaginative existence – I mean the existence of its image in the imagination. Its imaginative existence is followed by its intellectual existence, I mean the existence of its image within the heart. Some of these orders of being are of spiritual and some of corporeal character. Of the spiritual, some are more spiritualistic in their order of being than others. This is a kindness coming from the divine wisdom for God has made your eyeball in such a way that, in spite of its smallness, there is pictured within it the image of the world, the heavens and the earth with all their widely spreading extent. Then it goes on from existence in the realm of sensation to existence in the imagination, and from it to the existence in the heart. For you can never apprehend anything save that which has reached you, and had He not placed an image of the whole world within your very being, you would have no knowledge of that which is apart from yourself. Glory be to Him, who has arranged these wonders in heart and eyes and then blinded heart and eyes to the perception of them so that the hearts of the majority of creatures have become ignorant of themselves and their wonders.

Let us now go back to the purpose in view and say: “It is conceivable that the real nature of the world might be represented in the heart, once from the senses and once from the Preserved Tablet, even as it is conceivable that the image of the sun should be represented in the eye once from looking directly at it and once from looking at the water on which the sun shines which reflects its image. So, whenever the veils are lifted between the heart and the Preserved Tablet, the heart sees the things which are therein and the knowledge bursts forth into it therefrom, so that it does not have to acquire its knowledge through the avenues of the senses. This is like the bursting forth of water from the depths of the earth. Whenever the heart becomes occupied with things in the imagination derived from senses, this veils it from examining the Preserved Tablet, just as when water is preserved in streams, it is thereby prevented from bursting forth from the earth; or just as he looks into the water which reflects the image of the sun, he is not looking at the sun itself.

Thus, the heart has two doors. One door opens towards the dominion of the unseen which is the Preserved Tablet and the world of the angels. The other door opens

towards the five external senses which lay hold on the visible material world. This visible world also resembles the dominion of the unseen to a certain extent. Now the fact that the door of the heart is opened to the acquisition of knowledge through the senses is a thing you understand. But regarding its door which opens to the dominion of the unseen and the examining of the Preserved Tablet, you have certain knowledge through meditating upon the wonders of visions and the heart's observation in sleep of what will be in the future or what was in the past, without any acquisition on the part of the senses.

That door, however, is opened only to the one who devotes oneself exclusively to the remembrance of God. The Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said: "Men of single-mindedness of thought have taken the lead." He was asked: "Who are they?" He answered: "Those who are infatuated with the remembrance of God, for this devotional exercise of theirs, has cast aside from them their load of sins and they will come to the [day of] resurrection unburdened." Then he described them by relating the statement of God: "Then I shall draw near with My face towards them. Do you think about what anyone knows what thing I desire to bestow upon him towards whom I turn My face to?" Then He said: "The first thing I give them is that I cast something of My light into their hearts and they give tidings of Me even as I give tidings of them." (This narration is reported by Hadith collections Sahih Muslim, Al-Hakim, Al-Baihaqi and At-Tabarani on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah).

The entrance for these tidings is the inner door. So then therein lies the difference between the knowledge of the prophets and saints and that of the learned and philosophers: the knowledge of the former comes from within the heart through the door which is opened towards the dominion of the unseen, whereas the knowledge of the philosophers comes through the doors of the senses which open to the material world. The wonders of the world of the heart and its wavering between the visible and invisible worlds cannot be fully dealt with in the science of practical religion. But this is an example which will teach you the difference in the place of entrance of the two kinds of knowledge.

The second example will let you know the difference between the two types of work; I mean the work of the learned and that of the saints. The learned work to acquire knowledge itself and gather it into the heart, but the saints among the Sufis, labor only to the end of polishing, cleaning, clarifying, and furbishing the heart. It is related that once the Chinese and the Byzantine Greeks vied one another before a certain king as to the beauty of their workmanship in art and painting. So the king decided to give over to them a portico so that the Chinese might decorate one side of it and the Byzantine Greeks the other side and to let a curtain hang down between them so as to prevent each group from looking at the other. The Byzantines brought with them numerous beautiful colors but the Chinese entered without any color at all and began to polish their side and to furbish it. When the Byzantines had finished, the Chinese claimed that they had finished too. The king was astonished at their statement and the way in which they had finished and decorating without any color at all. So they were asked: "How

have you finished the work without any color?” They replied: “You have nothing to do with that; just lift the veil.” So, it was lifted and behold on the other side, there shone forth the wonders of the Byzantine skill with added illumination and dazzling brilliance since while the other side had become like unto a polished mirror by virtue of much furbishing. Thus, the beauty of their side was increased by its added clearness that brilliantly reflected the beauty of the other side. The care of the saints (or Gnostics) in cleansing, polishing, purifying and clarifying the heart until the true nature of reality shines forth clearly therein with utmost illumination is like the work of the Chinese. The care of the learned and philosophers about acquiring and adorning knowledge, and the representation of this adornment in the heart is like the work of the Byzantines.

But whatever it may be, the heart of the believer never dies, nor is its knowledge erased at death nor its clearness beclouded. To this Al-Hassan referred in his saying: “Dust will not consume the seat of faith.” This knowledge is a means of access that draws one near to God. But what the heart has attained of knowledge itself, or what it has attained of purity and capacity to receive the knowledge that writes upon the heart, does not enable it to dispense with more knowledge. There is no happiness for anyone apart from learning mystical knowledge and some degrees of happiness are nobler than others, just as there is no wealth without money. For he who has a *dirham* (an old currency) is wealthy and he who has storehouses crammed full is wealthy. The difference between degrees of [eternal] happiness is in accordance with their differences in mystical knowledge and faith, just as the difference between degrees of men of wealth is in accordance with the scarcity and abundance of their money.

At this point, the first part of this treatise that deals with expounding the real purpose of human life and attainment of eternal happiness and endless success comes to an end. Now the second part of this treatise begins.

Second Part: Exposition of the Way of Reaching the Real Purpose of Human Life and Attainment of Eternal Bliss and Endless Triumph

The selections from various great books of Ghazali, presented in the first part of this treatise, also explain the ways of attaining the real purpose of life and consequent eternal bliss and endless success. The third part of this treatise will list various books of tremendous benefit towards this end – nearly all of them authored by Ghazali – study of which provide immense understanding of and guidance to the right path. In this second part of this treatise, a prophetic narration and a tradition of a great gnostic will be presented to expound on the path that leads to realization of the real purpose of life and attainment of eternal happiness and endless success. The prophetic narration explains the obstacles of this great spiritual path and the tradition explains the method of reaching one’s final goal. Ghazali mentions this prophetic narration in his last book “*Minhaj al-Abideen ila Jannatu Rab al-‘Aalameen*” or “Best Path for the Worshippers of God Leading them to Paradise of the Lord of all the Universes and Existences” and in the chapter on

ostentation and showing off in the third volume of his compendium of wisdom “*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*” or “Revival of Knowledge of Path to God” as follows ^[11]:

Abdullah bin Mubarak (May God's mercy be upon him) has narrated from Khalid bin Ma'dan (May God's mercy be upon him) that he requested Mu'adh bin Jabal - a great prophetic companion (May God be pleased with him) - to narrate to him a *Hadith* (a tradition of Prophet Muhammad [may the peace and blessings of God be upon him]) which he remembered and rehearsed daily on account of its difficulty and severity. Mu'adh (may God be pleased with him) agreed to do so but he wept for a long time. He then said:

“How ardently I long to meet with the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him)!

Once I was with the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him [PBUH]). He was riding a camel and he (PBUH) took me up to sit behind him. When we moved on, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) looked up to the sky and said: “All praise is for God Who commands His creatures as He deems fit.” Then turning to me, he (PBUH) said: “I am telling you something, if you remember it, it will benefit you, but if you forget it then you will have no argument before Exalted God.

Mu'adh! Before creating the heavens, Exalted God created seven angels, one for every heaven and appointed one angel as a guard at each gate of the heavens according to the dimensions of the gate. When the two [guardian] angels '*Kiraman Katibeen*' (two angels that are on two shoulders of every human being and record all of the deeds whether good or bad) rise up with the deeds of the servants; there is light in them like the light of the sun. When they arrive at the [gate of the] first heaven, the angel standing as guard there asks '*Kiraman Katibeen*' (the guardian angels of every human being) to thrust the deed at the face of the servant [of God] (i.e., the human being whose actions are being taken to God). The angel says: I am the angel of 'Backbiting'. My Lord, God has commanded me that I should not allow the deed of a backbiter to go up.

The '*Kiraman Katibeen*' again rise up to the second heaven with some more deeds of the servant which shine like the sunshine. The angel stops them there and asks them to thrust the deed at the face of the servant, because his intention by this deed was to earn the worldly resources. My God has commanded me not to admit the deed of a person who worked for someone other than God. The angels then curse him (Arabic word for this is “*La'na*” which means invoking God to withhold His mercy from His servant) till the evening.

Then the angels rise up with other [good] deeds of the servant like almsgiving, fasting and other good deeds which they consider to be very virtuous and valuable. But when they arrive at the third heaven, the guarding angel stops them and asks them to thrust the deeds at the face of the doer. The [guarding] angel says that he is the Angel of 'Pride'. He has been commanded by his Lord not to allow the deeds to go up, as the

doer wanted through the deeds to display his superiority over other people [out of pride and arrogance].

The '*Kiraman Katibeen*' again rise up with some more [good] deeds of this servant [of God] which shine brightly like stars. These include beautiful deeds like prayers, '*Hajj*' (or pilgrimage), '*Tasbeeh*' (remembrance and glorification of God), fasting, etc. When they reach the fourth heaven, the guarding angel stops them and asks them to thrust the deeds at the doer's face. The angel tells them: I am the angel of 'self-righteousness' and have been commanded by my Lord not to let the deeds ascend higher [to God] as the doer adulterated his deeds with self-righteousness.

Then the angels decorate his other righteous deeds like a bride that include '*Hajj*' (or pilgrimage), striving in the Path of God, etc., shining like the sun. They take them to the fifth heaven. The guarding angel [at the gates of fifth heaven] stops them saying: I am the angel of 'Jealousy'. The doer remains jealous of those whom God has, by His Mercy, granted them His bounties. The man is not pleased with God's generous grants [to his fellow human beings]. My Lord has commanded me not to let his deeds go up higher.

Then the angels go up to the sixth heaven with his deeds like ablution, full purification, prayer, fasting, '*Hajj*' (or pilgrimage) etc. The guarding Angel posted there, stops them saying: I am the angel of 'Mercy'. Thrust his deeds at his face as he has never shown mercy to anyone. He was pleased to see others in trouble and misfortune. My Lord has commanded me that I should not let his deeds rise up higher.

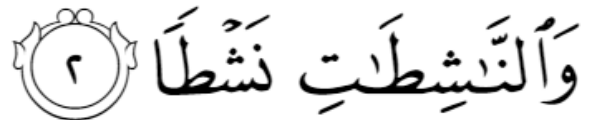
Thereafter, the '*Kiraman Katibeen*' rise up to the seventh heaven with some more deeds of this person including charity, prayer, fasting, striving in the Path of God, '*Taqwa*' (pious awe, reverence and fear of God), etc. These deeds give out loud sounds like thunder claps and lightening. The angel on the seventh heaven says: I am the angel of 'Fame and Show off'. This man has intended to earn fame through his deeds of moving in the company and assemblies of '*Ulema*' (scholars) and men of position and dignity. My Lord has commanded me not to let the deeds of this man go up higher.

Thus, deed which has not been done purely for Exalted God is '*Riya*' (show off, ostentation, or deeds done to impress others) and He does not accept such deeds. Then the angels rise up with his good deeds like prayers, fasting '*Zakat*' (mandatory poor-due or charity), '*Hajj*' (pilgrimage), '*Umrah*' (mini pilgrimage), amicable character, silence, remembrance of God, etc. The angels of the seventh heaven accompany them to see them off till they reach the Divine Court where all curtains are removed and they testify before God that the deeds of this servant are [done] exclusively for the sake of God.

At this moment, Exalted God shall say: You angels look after the deeds of those servants but I look after their heart. I know that by these deeds, he did not intend to seek My pleasure, nor did he do them exclusively for My sake. I know what he really intended by his deeds. My '*La'na*' (deprivation from My Mercy) be on him that he

deceived you as well as the people. He could, however, not deceive Me because I know very well the innermost recesses of the hearts conceal. None can remain hidden from Me nor escape My grip, however, hard he may try to be away from Me. I have full knowledge of what has happened in the past and what shall happen in the future. My knowledge encompasses all those who have passed away and those who are yet to come. I am fully aware of all the secrets with their full details. None can deceive Me by his deeds. My servant may deceive the ignorant but cannot deceive Me, because I am the Knower of the unseen. I, therefore, send My 'La'na' (deprivation from My Mercy) on him. The seven [guarding] angels [who guard the gates of seven heavens] and the three thousand angels, all send their 'La'na' (invoking God to deprive him of God's Mercy) on him. Then the inmates of the heavens say that on him be their curse ('La'na') and the curses of those who curse such deceiver.

After hearing all these details, Mu'adh (may God be pleased with him) burst into tears and said: O Messenger of God! How to get rid of this calamity? The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: O Mu'adh! Obey your prophet with full faith and conviction. Mu'adh (may God be pleased with him) said: You are the Messenger of God and I am Mu'adh bin Jabal. How can I get salvation? The Prophet of God (peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: O Mu'adh! If your deeds are not up to the mark, protect your tongue from speaking ill of others and disgracing others, particularly your brethren and the 'Huffaz' (those who have committed the entire Holy Qur'an by heart). Do not meddle in the affairs of your brethren and other persons. Let your own evil self (*Nafs*), refrain from dishonoring others. Do not praise your [own] self by speaking ill of your Muslim brethren. Never think of establishing your superiority by degrading others. Do not take resort to ostentation to earn fame. Do not busy yourself with the affairs of the world so keenly as to be totally neglectful of the affairs of the Hereafter. If someone is sitting with you, do not talk secretly [or whisper] to the third person. Do not express to others your superiority among the people lest your deeds should be ruined in the world and in the Hereafter. Refrain in your assemblies from talking on topics of shamelessness (vulgarity) and lewdness, lest people should avoid you on account of your misbehavior. Do not injure, with your tongue, the honor of others lest the dogs of hell tear you to pieces. Almighty God has said in the Holy Qur'an:



"And when they tear away the flesh from the bones." (Qur'an, Chapter 79, Verse 2)

I then said: O Messenger of God! Who possesses the ability to act upon all these injunctions? The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: Action is easy for that servant for whom God provides ease. Dislike for others that which you dislike for yourself. [Actions in this way may bring you your salvation]." (Hafiz Iraqi has done *Hadith* authentication of all *Hadiths* present in Ghazali's "*Ihya Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" and have termed source reference of this prophetic tradition as "*Kitab az-Zuhd li Ibn al-Mubarak*" or "Book of Abstention from Base Desires by Ibn al-Mubarak" and "*Ibn al-Jawzi fi al-Maudu'at*")

Khalid bin Ma'dan (may God have mercy upon him) said that Mu'adh did not recite the Holy Qur'an as much as he recited this *hadith* (or prophetic narration). He frequently talked about this *hadith* in his gatherings.

The hearts shudder with fear and suffocation and the minds are disturbed by thinking of the warnings and great risks disclosed in this *Hadith* (prophetic narration). It is therefore, necessary to seek God's protection and refuge and lay yourself at His gate, weeping and in all humbleness and submission all days and nights. You have no protection from this torment except God's Mercy. You cannot cross over this sea without God's glance of compassion on you. It is necessary for you to rise from the slumber of negligence, to understand the aim and purpose of life and to launch a valiant struggle against the self in this terrible valley, so that you may attain salvation in the Hereafter and may not go with those who are doomed to loss and ruin. Help will, however, come only from God and He alone is the Most Merciful.

Now an important narration will be presented here that explains the way of achieving the purpose of life. Ghazali mentions this narration in his book "*Ayyuhal Walad*" or "My Dear Beloved Son" which is present in Ghazali's 3-volume collection of short books "*Majmu'a Rasa'il Imam Ghazali*" or "Collection of Short Books by Imam Ghazali" as follows ^[12]:

It is said that among the students and *mureeds* (disciples who seek spiritual perfection and enlightenment through the attainment of purification of their souls from all evil desires and tendencies under the guidance of a spiritual guide who has in turn completely attained this purification of the soul and high station before God through training, guidance, and proximity of another spiritual guide) of Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him), was a student and disciple named Hatim Ism (May God Shower His Mercy upon him, who in turn became a great spiritual master later on through the spiritual training and guidance of Shaykh Shaqeeq). One day Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) said to him:

"O Hatim! For how long have been in my company (spiritual proximity) and have been listening to what I have been saying (teaching)?"

Shaykh Hatim Ism (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) replied: "Thirty-three years!"

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi asked:

"In that [long] time period, what benefit have you derived from me?"

Shaykh Hatim Ism (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) responded:

“[I have] obtained eight benefits [from you].”

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) responded:

“Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilaeyhe Raji’oon.”

“To God we belong and to Him shall we return (it’s a supplication from Qur’an that is made at times of loss and grief).”

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) then said:

“O Hatim! I have spent my lifetime in teaching and training and you have just gained eight benefits from me?”

Shaykh Hatim Ism (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) replied:

“O my teacher! If you asked [me] for the truth then the reality is what I [just] told you. I do not need any more [benefits] and these benefits from knowledge are quite sufficient because I am certain that I will attain salvation [and success] in this life and in the life in the hereafter through these eight benefits.”

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) asked him:

“All right! Tell me, what are those eight benefits?”

BENEFITS NARRATED BY HATIM BIN ISM

“O my teacher! The **first benefit** is that I looked at the people of this world and saw that everyone has a beloved. But these beloveds of the people [of the world] are such that some of them (i.e., the beloveds) are with them (i.e., the people) until their illness that brings death, some of them are with them until death, some of them are with them until they reach their graves, and after burial all the beloveds return from there. None of their beloveds go with them in their graves to live with them there and to provide their company [in the darkness, solitude, narrowness, and horror of the grave]. I contemplated on this and said to myself that only that is a good beloved who goes with them in the grave and lives with his/her lover, who will provide the company, who will illuminate the grave, who will be a partner on the Day of Judgment and its destinations (stations that one goes through after burial until the Day of Judgment). I saw that the only beloved who has these [good] qualities is my good (pious/righteous) deeds. After this [determination and awareness], I made my good deeds my beloved so that it goes with me in my grave [when I die], will provide me with its company, will become an illuminated candle in my grave, will be my partner in all stages of life hereafter, and never ever separate away from me.”

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) said:

“Bravo O Hatim! You have told a very good thing. Now narrate the second benefit.”

“O my teacher! The **second benefit** is that I glanced at the people of the world and saw that everyone was following after the pleasures and desires from the *Nafs* (lower self that instructs one to commit evil) and [everyone] is subservient to the desires from the lower self. Upon seeing that, I deliberated on the following holy verse [from Qur’an]:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۗ
فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ ۙ

“But the one who has stood in fear of his/her Sustainer’s Presence, and restrained his/her inner self from the base (low and evil) desires, Paradise will be the place of rest [for this person].” (Qur’an, Chapter 79, Verses 40-41)

I developed the certitude that the Wise Qur'an is correct and the book of God is the truth. Then I established a front against my *Nafs* (lower self) and became determined to oppose it. I molded it (i.e., my lower self) in such a shape that I did not fulfill any of its desires until it started to find peace [and satisfaction] in the worship of God, the Exalted."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) responded:

"May God, the Exalted, provide His blessings in your good deeds. Now narrate the third benefit."

"O my teacher! The **third benefit** is that when I glanced at the people, I saw that every person, with great pain and hard work, is busy in accumulating the possessions (money, wealth, goods) of this mortal world and is very happy that he/she has a lot of goods and material possessions. But when I contemplated on the following holy verse from the bounteous Qur'an:

مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ

"All that is with you is bound to come to an end, whereas all that, which is with God is everlasting." (Qur'an, Chapter 16, Verse 96)

Then whatever [material possessions] I accumulated in the world, I spent it all in Way of God by distributing it among pious indigents and beggars so that it (the material possessions that I distributed in the Way of God) will get deposited with God, the Exalted, as my trust and will become source of immense good and ransom (i.e., salvation) in the life hereafter."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) said:

"O Hatim! May God grant you His Compensation (reward for your spending in His Way)! You said a very good thing and have done a very good thing. Now narrate the fourth benefit."

“O my teacher! The **fourth benefit** is that I looked at the people of the world and saw that some of them think that grandeur and honor belong to the nation or tribe (group) that is big and powerful, that’s why they are expressing pride in their tribe (nation or group). Some of them are such that they think that the grandeur is obtained through abundance of wealth, [material] possessions, family and relatives that’s why [some] people are expressing their pride in their wealth and children. Some [people] are such that they think that their grandeur and honor is in displaying anger, beating, killing, murder and pillage and they express their pride in that. Some [people] are such that they think that their grandeur is in wasteful spending that’s why they consider their wasteful spending a source of honor and express their pride in that. But I deliberated on this verse in which God, the Exalted, says:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْتَقِمُ

“Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious [and fearful] of Him.” (Qur’an, Chapter 49, Verse 13)

Therefore, this is correct and is the truth and the creations’ thoughts are false and wrong conjectures. That’s why I adopted *Taqwa* (pious reverence, consciousness, awe, and fear of God) so that I get counted as the one with the highest rank in the sight of God, the Exalted.”

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) said:

“O Hatim! May God be pleased with you. You have said a very good thing. Now narrate the fifth benefit.”

“O my teacher! The **fifth benefit** is that I looked at the people who were complaining about each other. It was found that they were doing all this because of envy, jealousy, and enmity and the main cause of that is [the desire and competition for] greatness, grandeur, [material] possessions, wealth, and knowledge. I contemplated on the following verse from the Holy Qur’an in which it’s said:

نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

“It is We who distribute their means of livelihood (sustenance) among them in the life of this world.” (Qur’an, Chapter 43, Verse 32)

Then I thought that God, the Blessed and Exalted, has appointed the possessions and ranks since the first beginning [of the creation] and no one has any control [or say] in this matter. Therefore, I did not compete or had jealousy with anyone and remained agreed to God's distribution [of worldly bounties among all people of the world] and [His appointed] destiny and got along with the whole world [by giving up all jealousies and enmities against all of God's creations]."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) said:

"O Hatim! You are saying the truth and you are doing the right thing. Now narrate the sixth benefit."

"O my teacher! The **sixth benefit** is that when I glanced at the people, I saw that every person is having enmity with someone else for some reason. Then I deliberated on the following verse:

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا

"Verily, *Shaytan* (Satan) is your enemy so treat him as your enemy." (Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 6)

After that, I developed the certitude that God's saying is the truth, I should not have any enmity with anyone other than *Shaytan* (Satan). Since then, I considered Satan as my enemy and did not obey any of his orders. Instead, I developed obedience [of God] and followed the commandments of God, the Exalted and adopted only His worship and servitude. The correct way is the *Sirat al-Mustaqeem* (the straight path of Divine guidance in which there is no crookedness) as God, the Exalted, has Himself said:

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

"Have I not obtained this promise from you that O you the Children of Adam! Never ever obey the *Shaytan* (Satan). No doubt, he is your avowed (open) enemy and worship Me alone [because] this is the straight path." (Qur'an, Chapter 36, Verse 60)

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) said: “O Hatim! You did a very good thing and said a very good thing. Now narrate the seventh benefit.”

“O my teacher! The **seventh benefit** is that I looked at the people and saw that every person is preoccupied with his/her livelihood and search for sustenance and is involved in an intense effort. In this regards, he/she is not even differentiating between *Halal* (permissible) and *Haram* (forbidden) but instead, is getting humiliated with doubtful and *Haram* (forbidden) earnings. Then I deliberated on the following verse:

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا

“And there is no living creature on earth whose sustenance is not the responsibility of God.” (Qur’an, Chapter 11, Verse 6)

Then I developed the certitude that the Wise Qur’an is the truth and is correct and that I am also among those living creatures [of God] that are present on earth. So thus, I got engaged in the worship of God and developed the certitude that He will bring to me [my] sustenance because He has promised [to provide me with] sustenance.”

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) said:

“You did a very good thing and told a very good thing. Now narrate the eighth benefit.”

“O my teacher! The **eighth benefit** is that when I looked at the people, I found that every person’s reliance [or trust] is on someone or something. Some have trust [or rely] on their [material] possessions, some trust [or rely] on other people. Therefore, I pondered on this holy verse in which God, the Blessed and Exalted, says:

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

”And for everyone who places his/her trust in God, He [alone] is enough [for him/her].” (Qur’an, Chapter 65, Verse 3)

'*Wa Huwa Husbi Wa Nai'mal Wakeel.*'

'And He is sufficient for me and He is the best Helper.'

[Therefore, I adopted complete reliance on God in every matter.]”

When Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God Shower His Mercy upon him) heard these [eight] benefits, he said:

“O Hatim! May God grant you His *Tawfeeq* (i.e., enable you to do righteous deeds and to walk on His Path). You have told very good things. I have seen in *Taurat* (Torah), *Injil* (Gospel of Prophet Jesus), *Zabur* (Psalms), and in the praiseworthy differentiator between right and wrong (i.e., the Holy Qur’an), that all these books [of God] mention these eight benefits, i.e., all four books in their teachings have told [us] these eight benefits. Whoever acts on these [eight principles] is like as if he/she has acted on all four [holy] books.”

Benefits of Treading the Path of Attaining Purpose of Life and Eternal Happiness

At this point, it is clear that the real purpose of life is to attain the Gnosis (“*Ma’rifā*”) of God that in turn leads to eternal happiness and endless success. Now the question arises, “What are the benefits of striving hard towards this end and treading the path that leads to eternal happiness?” Again, help will be sought from Ghazali’s works to answer this important question. Ghazali has summarized the benefits of striving to achieve the real purpose of life and of attainment of eternal bliss towards the end his last book “*Minhaj al-Abideen ila Jannatu Rab al-‘Aalameen*” or “Best Path for the Worshippers of God Leading them to Paradise of the Lord of all the Universes and Existences” or short title “Best Path for Worshippers of God”. He writes ^[13]:

You should know that this path [of realization and achievement of the real purpose of life and eternal happiness] in its width and length, is not like the paths of the world that are travelled by walking with strength or weakness. This is a spiritual journey which is undertaken with the hearts (souls). It is completed with the help of wisdom and contemplation, belief and insight. Its basis is the celestial light and Divine glance. If they fall on anyone, the secrets of the two worlds becomes clearly exposed to him.

Sometimes the light is not available even after searching for it for one hundred years, because many mistakes and shortcomings are committed during its search. Sometimes this light is attained in fifty years, sometimes in ten years. Some fortunate persons get it in one day rather than only in one hour with the help of God who is the owner of the light. Despite all this, the servant of God has been commanded to strive in this path and

he is to obey this command. The final result depends on the destiny and fate. You must have in your heart a firm belief that God is just, He does whatever He wills and how He wills it.

You may say that this is a very difficult matter and the servant of God is in need of many things. What will be the purpose of all this labor and hard work? I agree that it is quite true that the path has terrible risks. That's why God has said in Holy Qur'an:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا
وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ﴿٧٢﴾

“Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it and man assumed it. Surely, he has proved to be an oppressor and foolish.” (Qur'an, Chapter 33, Verse 72)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) has also said in a *Hadith* (a prophetic narration):

لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ مَا أَعْلَمُ لَبَكَيْتُمْ كَثِيرًا وَلَضَحَكْتُمْ قَلِيلًا

"If you come to know what I know, you will weep much and laugh little."

Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (a great prophetic companion) (may God be pleased with him) used to say:

"I like that I should have been a blade of grass that some animal would have eaten."

This was due to the fear of [Divine] punishment [for wrongdoings in worldly matters] that he said this. It is narrated from Umar (another great prophetic companion) (may God be pleased with him) that he heard someone reciting this verse of the Holy Qur'an:

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُن شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا ﴿١﴾

"There has come upon man a time in which he was nothing worth mentioning." (Qur'an, Chapter 76, Verse 1)

Upon hearing this, Umar (may God be pleased with him) said:

"Would that the life had been completed in that condition!"

[He said that out of fear of God]. Abu Ubaidah bin Jarrah (another great prophetic companion) (may God be pleased with him) used to say:

"I like that I would have been a ram in my house; my flesh would have been distributed and my soup had been eaten and that I had not been even born at all."

He (may God be pleased with him) also said:

“I envy those who had not [even] been born.”

You are thinking that this is a very difficult task. Indeed, it is more difficult and risky than you can imagine. At any rate, this task was ordained in the knowledge of God in the very beginning of creation and it is that Great Knower of things Who has issued this program and procedure.

A servant of God has, therefore, no alternative but to strive hard in his service and worship of God. He should rely on God and be always submissive and humble in His Presence, so that He may have mercy upon him and save him from failure and ruin.

I reflected deeply on this subject that when a servant [of God] takes to devotion and service to God and continues on this path the whole of his lifetime, the Exalted God, grants him about forty types of favors [and blessings]. Twenty in this world and twenty in the hereafter. These [Divine bounties for treading the path to Gnosis of God] are as follows:

First: Exalted God Himself praises the man. You can easily imagine the righteousness of the man who is the subject of God's praise.

Second: Exalted God thanks him and exalts him. Now think what a great source of honor and gain it is to be the target of God's praise and exaltations!

Third: Exalted God loves him. What a great boon and honor it is for a man to be the beloved of God!

Fourth: Exalted God takes the responsibility to solve all of his problems and difficulties.

Fifth: Exalted God arranges that his sustenance should reach him without any work, search or anxiety on his part.

Sixth: Exalted God becomes his helper and protector against every opponent and enemy.

Seventh: Exalted God keeps the heart of the man well-pleased and contented [this is what that gives one true inner peace and tranquility, and contentment and happiness of the heart].

Eighth: God confers on him such honor and status that he is saved from the disgrace of serving the world and the people of the world. Moreover, he does not like even the rulers and the dignitaries of the world to serve him.

Ninth: God makes him magnanimous and courageous. He does not get polluted with the filth and pollution of the world or of its people, nor does he take heed of their conduct and negative and useless activities, just as wise men ignore the foolish activities of children, men and women.

Tenth: God Almighty bestows on him the contentment of the heart. He remains in the world with a very high level of self-respect [and dignity that comes with it]. His magnanimity is not affected by an accident or by his deprivation of anything.

Eleventh: Exalted God grants him the light of the heart whereby he has access to the secrets of matters [and inner wisdom behind them] to which others have no access to despite their efforts and hard work.

Twelfth: God bestows on him farsightedness and ambition. He is not at all disturbed by the vicissitudes of times, nor is he disgusted with the ill-treatment and misbehavior of the people, nor with their evil designs [as he is divinely protected both outwardly and inwardly].

Thirteenth: Exalted God establishes in the hearts of others, the fear and awe of him. All good and bad men respect him and the despots of the time remain afraid of him.

Fourteenth: God creates his love in the hearts of the people. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا

“The Beneficent (God) shall appoint for them love [on earth and in the hearts of people of the world].” (Qur'an, Chapter 19, Verse 96)

Fifteenth: Blessings are created in all of his possessions, namely, his speech, his deeds, his clothes and his house. The people regard as something very sacred the ground on which he walks or place where he stays for a day or so.

Sixteenth: The entire land, seas and oceans of the world become obedient and subservient to him. If he desires to walk on water or in the space, he can do that. He possesses the capacity of covering the entire globe in only an hour.

Seventeenth: All living animals, beasts, birds, etc. become obedient and subservient to him, even if they are dangerous wild beasts or insects and creatures that crawl. Wild animals love him and dangerous beasts lick him.

Eighteenth: He becomes the owner of the treasures of the world. Wherever he puts his hand, he finds treasure and wherever he puts his feet, water gushes out from there. Wherever he turns, he finds sustenance [from his Lord].

Nineteenth: God grants him such place in His court that people take him as an intermediary (or intercessor) for the fulfilment of their needs [from God].

Twentieth: His prayers are accepted in the Divine Court and he gets what he prays for. If he intercedes for anyone, his intercession is accepted. Similarly, if he takes an oath, Exalted God vindicates his oath. Even the mountain moves from its base at his beckoning. Whenever a wish arises in his heart, God fulfils it without [even] asking for it on his part.

These [above] twenty blessings are the examples of worldly blessings, honor and grace [for treading the path of Gnosis ("Ma'rifa") of God]. The remaining twenty blessings mentioned below relate to the hereafter:

Twenty First: The agony of death, from which [even] the Prophets [of God] (may the peace and blessings of God be upon them all) also sought refuge, is made easy for them. For some people, the taste of death is so welcome as a draught of water is for a thirsty person. It occurs in the Holy Qur'an:

تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ . (سورة النحل : ٣٢)

"The angels take out their souls, while they are in a state of purity and piety." (Qur'an, Chapter 16, Verse 32)

Twenty Second: The blessings of Divine knowledge (Gnosis or "Ma'rifa") and faith ("Iman") remaining safe and secure for them. These are the blessings for the attainment of which, all sorts of hardships, distresses, sufferings and grief are borne. Exalted God has said in the Holy Qur'an:

يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ
(سورة ابراهيم : ٢٧)

"God firms up those who believe, by a firm saying, in the life of the world and in the hereafter." (Qur'an, Chapter 14, Verse 27)

Twenty Third: He is provided with comfort and peace at the time of death and will be given the glad tidings of admission into Paradise with peace and contentment. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an:

لَا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ . (سورة
الصفات : ٣٠)

"Do not fear nor grieve, but hear glad tidings of Paradise which you were promised." (Qur'an, Chapter 41, Verse 30).

Now, he will have no fear about the sufferings of the hereafter, nor grief of leaving behind the blessings and comforts of the world.

Twenty Fourth: He will be favored with the bliss of eternal life in Paradise.

Twenty Fifth: At the time of death, his soul will be illuminated and he will be honored and exalted in the presence of the angels. As regards to his apparent condition, his body will be handled with due esteem and regard and taken to the graveyard on the shoulders of men assembled to pay respect to his funeral. A large number of Muslims will take part in his funeral prayer as a great mark of respect for the dead as well as for themselves. People compete with one another to level their shoulders to his funeral.

Twenty Sixth: His grave is made spacious and illumined [by God]. He stays in one of the gardens of Paradise till the Day of Judgment.

Twenty Seventh: He will be secure from the trial of questioning in the grave [by angels]. The correct answers [to their questions] will be inspired to him.

Twenty Eighth: His soul will be in a state of intimacy with God. It is cast in a green bird of Paradise and stays with his pious brethren.

Twenty Ninth: He shall be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection with great honor and with crown and throne. He will ride on "*Burraq*" (a heavenly ride to be entered into Paradise on it).

Thirtieth: His face will be made illuminated and shining. It occurs in the Holy Qur'an:

وَجُوهٌ يُّؤْمِنُ بِمُسْفِرَةٍ ضَاحِكَةٌ مُسْتَبْشِرَةٌ. (سورة عبس: ٣٨-٣٩)

"On that day, faces will be bright, laughing, rejoicing at glad tidings [from their Lord]."
(Qur'an, Chapter 80, Verses 38-39)

Thirty First: He will be protected from the horrors and torments of the Day of Judgment. It occurs in the Holy Qur'an:

أَفَمَنْ يُلْقَى فِي النَّارِ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ يَأْتِي آمِنًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ط (سورة : ٤٠)

"Is he who is hurled into the Hell better or he who comes secure on the Day of Resurrection?"

Thirty Second: The register of deeds will be handed over on the Day of Judgment in their right hands. Some among them will be such as will be exempt from reckoning and will not need their register of deeds.

Thirty Third: There will be some whose reckoning will be made easy for them and there will be some who will not be subjected to any reckoning at all.

Thirty Fourth: At the time of weighing of the deeds, the scale of the good deeds will be heavier than that of the bad deeds.

Thirty Fifth: He will be given from the pool of “*Kauthar*” of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) pure water after drinking which, he shall never feel thirsty again.

Thirty Sixth: He shall cross over the Bridge of “*Sira*” safe and secure and will be saved from Hell.

Thirty Seventh: He will have the authority of interceding for others on the plain of resurrection, just like the Prophets of God (may God be pleased with them all).

Thirty Eighth: He will get into Paradise's eternal kingdom and everlasting blessings.

Thirty Ninth: He will be favored with honor of enjoying God's pleasure and appreciation and he will have the Divine acceptance and approval.

Fortieth: He will have the greatest blessings of seeing Exalted God, the object of worship of the entire creation from Eternity to Infinity, Who has neither physical shape or form.

I have listed here this number [of blessings in the amount of forty] according to my poor understanding with a very brief description of each as elaboration would require larger space for this. For example, I have described the Eternal Kingdom as one blessing. If I were to describe this one blessing in detail, this alone would have exceeded forty blessings. Again, the details of each of these are so varied and vast that none but the Knower of the unseen, God knows them. The Holy Qur'an declare

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“No soul knows what is kept concealed for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do.” (Qur'an, Chapter 32, Verse 17)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said in a *Hadith* (prophetic narration): “Paradise has been equipped and furnished with blessings which neither an eye has seen nor an ear has heard about them, nor has an idea about them even occurred to anyone's heart.”

God has said in the Holy Qur'an:

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مَدَادًا لَكَلِمَتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ نُنْفِدَ كَلِمَتِ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

“If ocean becomes ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord are exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement.” (Qur’an, Chapter 18, Verse 109)

The commentators of the Holy Qur’an have said that the words mentioned in this verse are those which Exalted God shall speak to the inmates of Paradise for their pleasure and happiness. When this is the condition of Paradise, it is not possible for anyone to know even one millionth part of its blessings.

It is necessary to attain this great blessing that those who have courage should strive for and those who have knowledge and earning should work for them. You should know that a servant stands in need of four qualities:

1. Knowledge,
2. Actions and efforts [according to the knowledge acquired],
3. Sincerity [in efforts according to one’s acquired knowledge], and
4. Fear [of God that works may fall short in the eyes of God due to various shortcomings and thus may not be worthy of Divine acceptance].

It is necessary for a servant of God, first of all, to determine the course of action [for attaining the real purpose of one’s life, as expounded before, that in turn leads to eternal happiness and everlasting triumph] and this is possible only with the help of knowledge. Seeking the course of action without knowledge will be nothing more than groping in the dark. Therefore, he should act upon the demands of knowledge, but without actions [and striving] he makes no headway. Whatever actions he takes, should be exclusively for seeking the pleasure of God [without any materialistic or ulterior motives]. Action without sincerity will do him no good, but may do him harm [instead]. Thereafter, he should always remain in fear about the acceptability or otherwise of his actions. Without the dose of fear [of God, i.e., “*Taqwa*”], he will be susceptible to deception [due to self-righteousness as opposed to humility before God].

Third Part: Sources of Knowledge for Reaching the Real Purpose of Human Life and Attainment of Eternal Bliss and Endless Triumph

This treatise has dealt with, in some details, the real purpose of life and the path of attaining it that in turn leads to the eternal happiness and endless success. This subject matter is immense and intense that volumes have been written by great knowers of universal truths or Gnostics throughout the previous centuries, in order to expound on it and illumine the path for humanity. This short treatise has attempted to provide a glimpse of its immensity, in the light of the spirituality and writings of one of the greatest exponents of this knowledge that humanity has

ever produced – Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali (May God shower His immense mercy upon him). It is of paramount importance to list some of the greatest works on this subject of immense relevance and benefit to all, that all seekers of truth can benefit from. At this point, it is fair to ask, “From where can one obtain the relevant knowledge of the purpose of life and ways of attaining eternal happiness and endless success so that the path becomes clear, illumined and widened for the one who wants to tread it and upon acting on this knowledge, one can actually reach the purpose of one’s life and thus be immersed in the state of eternal bliss and endless success?” Fortunately, this great knowledge, although not commonly known, is available to anyone who wants to benefit from it. The knowledge of the way of achieving the real purpose of life and of consequent eternal happiness and endless triumph, can be obtained from the following marvelous works that illumine the path for all sincere seekers of truth:

1. Through an in-depth study of Qur’an, with aid of a good exegesis, in the light of ten objectives of Qur’an as expounded by Ghazali in his book “*Jawahir al-Qur’an*” or “Jewels of the Qur’an” that are also stated in this treatise. Study these ten objectives, understand and internalize them, study Qur’an with these ten objectives in mind and furthermore, study the following books in light of these ten principles and objectives.
2. Ghazali’s book “*Minhaj al-Abideen ila Jannatu Rab al-‘Aalameen*” or “Best Path for the Worshippers of God Leading them to Paradise of the Lord of all the Universes and Existences” or short title “Best Path for Worshippers”. This book explains briefly the purpose of life and how to acquire eternal happiness and endless success. Many selections of this remarkable book have been included in this treatise.
3. The remarkable introduction of Ghazali’s book “*Kimiya-e-Sa’adat*” (or “*Kimiya as-Sa’ada*”) that he wrote in Persian or “Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success”, that explains eternal happiness and immortality and true success of a human being. Remaining part of this book can also be read to learn the forty steps, in brief, needed to advance on this path. The remarkable introduction of this book is featured prominently in the first part of this treatise.
4. The four-volume compendium of wisdom by Ghazali named “*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*” or “Revival of Knowledge of Path to God” also known as “Revival of Religious Sciences”. This immense book, divided in forty short books – each representing a step in the spiritual path to Gnosis or “*Ma’rifa*” of God, presents a detailed exposition of the purpose of human life and path of attaining eternal bliss.
5. Last but not least, the best-selling poet of both the east and the west, Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, popularly known as “Rumi”, wrote the greatest poetry on Gnosis of God in the entire human history, called “*Mathnavi-e-Ma’navi*” or “Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings”. Please study it with a good translation and scholarly explanation. This magnificent book brings out the deep inner wisdom of Qur’an and with its help, one can achieve the purpose of one’s life and consequent eternal happiness and endless success.

The list of recommended books can be enormous, as the timeless treasures of wisdom, left behind by masters of eternal happiness – the Gnostics or knowers of universal truths and Divine wisdom – is enormous. However, the journey of a million miles has to begin somewhere and this short list, will both be the starting point and the culmination of this great journey for the quest of eternal happiness and endless success. May you be divinely protected and guided, in navigating through the stormy waters of this fathomless and immense ocean of eternal truths, in

your journey towards true self-realization and attainment of the real purpose of life and consequent eternal happiness and everlasting triumph.

Books Recommended for Further Study

Tafsir Al-Tustari (Great Commentaries of the Holy Qur'an) by Sahl ibn 'Abd Allah al-Tustari (Author), Yousef Meri (Editor), Annabel Keeler (Translator), Ali Keeler (Translator)

Publisher: Fons Vitae (April 13, 2011)

ISBN-10: 1891785192; ISBN-13: 978-1891785191

This exegesis of Qur'an of selected verses goes into the deeper meanings of the Divine revelation and brings out the gems embedded deep within.

The Message of the Qur'an: The full account of the revealed Arabic text accompanied by parallel transliteration by Muhammad Asad (Editor, Translator)

Publisher: The Book Foundation; Revised edition (December 1, 2008)

ISBN-10: 1904510353; ISBN-13: 978-1904510352

This is a complete exegesis or explanation of Qur'an.

The Path of the Worshipful Servants to the Garden of the Lord of All the Worlds (Minhaj Al-'abidin) by Imam Ghazali

Publisher: Al-Baz Publishing USA (2011)

ISBN-10: 1882216261; ISBN-13: 978-1882216260

Imam Ghazali's last book outlining a seven-step path for spiritual perfection and illumination.

Al-Ghazzali Alchemy of Happiness 2 Vol. set by Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazzali (Author), Jay R. Crook (Translator), Laleh Bakhtiar (Introduction)

Publisher: Kazi Publications, Inc. (January 1, 2007)

ISBN-10: 1567446744; ISBN-13: 978-1567446746

Imam Ghazali's masterpiece "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" outlining the transformative agent of eternal happiness and endless success.

Revival of Religion's Sciences (Ihya Uloom ad-Deen) 4 Volume set by Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali (Author), Muhammad Mahdi Al-Sharif (Translator)

Publisher: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, Beirut, Lebanon (2011)

SKU 1010021; ISBN: 9782745159458

<http://jamalon.com/en/1010021.html>

Imam Ghazali's 4-volume compendium of wisdom dissecting every aspect of spiritual path leading to attainment of one's purpose of life and consequent eternal happiness and endless success.

Masnavi (6 volumes) by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi. R.A. Nicholson (Translator)

http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/about_nicholson.html

"*Mathnavi-e-Ma'navi*" or "Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings" by the best-selling poet in the US popularly known as Rumi, is a magnificent 6-volume book that brings out the deep inner wisdom of Qur'an, deeper meaning and purpose of one's life and consequent eternal happiness and endless success. This is the best spiritual poetry ever written on Gnosis and Divine Love.

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This treatise challenges readers to raise ambitions and soar to the heights of the pinnacle of human achievement, instead of sinking to the depths of despair and low achievement due to lack of true purpose and direction in life, subconscious dedication to the mundane and contentment with the ordinary. This treatise, unfolding in intensity as it progresses, shows the art of the possible and true potential and worth of human being, which in turn leads to eternal happiness and endless success into a life of immortal eternity. Limitations of human body, mind and intellect, trapped in the constraints of dimensions of time and space, are more than compensated, by the loftiness of its heart and soul, once liberated from the shackles that hold it down. This treatise leads one to the fathomless ocean of eternal happiness and never-ending success, putting one firmly on the path of eternal bliss, opening up new previously unknown vistas of awareness and spiritual illumination and culminating in the dawning of eternal truths.